



Romans 11:11-24 (ESV)

Israel's Rejection Not Final

¹¹ I ask, then, have they stumbled in order to fall? Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their stumbling,^[a] salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their stumbling^[b] brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full number bring!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. In view of the fact that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if I can somehow make my own people^[c] 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 offered up 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 in among them and have come to share in the rich root^[d] of the cultivated olive tree, ¹⁸ do not brag that you are better than those branches. But if you do brag—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 by unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, 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 and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

Romans 11:11-24 (HCSB)

Israel's Rejection Not Final

¹¹ I ask, then, have they stumbled in order to fall? Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their stumbling,^[a] salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their stumbling^[b] brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full number bring!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. In view of the fact that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if I can somehow make my own people^[c] 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 offered up 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 in among them and have come to share in the rich root^[d] of the cultivated olive tree, ¹⁸ do not brag that you are better than those branches. But if you do brag—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 by unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, 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 and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

English Standard Version Bible - Study Bible¹

Romans 11:11-24

11:11-32 *God's Righteousness in His Plan for Jews and Gentiles.* God's saving righteousness is featured in the salvation of Israel at the end of history, and in his saving plan for both Jews and Gentiles.

11:11 Israel's hardening is not the final word. God planned salvation history so that Israel's **trespass** would open salvation for the Gentiles, and the Jews in turn would be provoked to jealousy when they see Gentiles being saved and enjoying a relationship with God.

11:12 The term **world** is another word for **Gentiles** here. **Full inclusion** looks forward to the fulfillment of God's saving promises to ethnic Israel. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater: if Israel's sin brought salvation to the Gentiles, then the blessing will be even greater when all Israel is saved (see [v. 15](#)).

11:13-14 As **an apostle**, Paul had a special calling and commission to preach the good news **to the Gentiles**. But he uses his ministry to the Gentiles also to benefit the Jews, for he hopes that the more Gentiles come to salvation, the more this will provoke the Jews to jealousy, so that many will be saved.

11:15 If the **rejection** of the majority of Israel has meant that many Gentiles (**the world**) are now reconciled to God through Christ, then the **acceptance** of the Jews (their future coming to Christ in large numbers) will bring about the final resurrection (**life from the dead**) and the end of history, so that from that point on people will praise God forever and ever (see [v. 12](#)). Others think "life from the dead" is a figurative expression for great spiritual revival.

11:16 Two illustrations are used that teach the same truth. The **firstfruits** and the **root** probably refer to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the saving promises given to them. If the firstfruits and root are consecrated to God, so too are the **whole lump** (of **dough**) and **the branches** (i.e., the Jewish people as a whole); see [Num. 15:17-21](#) for OT origin of the imagery. As Paul has already explained in [Romans 9-10](#), it does not follow from this that every Jewish person will be saved, but it does indicate that God will be faithful to his promises ([9:6](#)) and seems to imply that in the future many more Jews will be saved.

11:17 The illustration of the root and its **branches** is elaborated upon in [vv. 17-24](#). The people of God are portrayed here as an **olive tree** (cf. [Jer. 11:16-19](#); [Hos. 14:6-7](#)). When Paul says **some** branches were removed, he probably has in mind the majority of the Jews of his day. Gentiles as wild shoots were grafted into the olive tree and now share in the **root** (the promises made to the patriarchs).

11:18-20 Gentile believers are warned against arrogance, for it is God's saving promises (**the root**), not their own goodness, that saved them. Thus Gentiles might be tempted with pride because God removed the Jewish **branches** from the olive tree and grafted them in instead. But this should provoke **fear** and awe (Gk. *phobeō*, "to be afraid, have profound respect and reverence, have fear of offending"), for the Jews were removed because they failed to believe and the Gentiles remain only because of their continued trust.

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 11".

11:21 Fear is the appropriate response, for God will not **spare** anyone who does not continue to believe, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Fear here does not refer to a paralyzing fear. Rather, it is the kind of humble fear that does not take God or salvation for granted, or think lightly of his displeasure.

11:22-24 The Gentile readers must contemplate God's **kindness** and **severity**. His severity has been the portion of Jews who have not believed, but his kindness has been poured out on the Gentiles. Still, they must persevere in faith. Otherwise, they too will be judged as unbelievers. Furthermore, God will **graft** back onto the olive tree any Jews who put their faith in Christ. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater. If God **grafted** onto the olive tree Gentiles, who are the wild branches, then surely he can and will graft back onto the olive tree Jews, who are the original branches from the tree.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible² *Romans 11:11-24*

11:11 Like a runner in a race, the Jewish nation had **stumbled**, but they had not totally fallen. Their stumbling had a purpose—to bring **salvation** to the **Gentiles**. Salvation for the Gentiles will eventually provoke the Jews to envy ([Ac 13:45-51](#)). In the book of Acts Paul regularly went to preach in the synagogues first, but then would turn to the Gentiles following Jewish rejection. This pattern continued until the end of the book of Acts (cp. [28:26-29](#)).

11:12,15-16 The future reception of Jews by God will result in **world** blessing. If their unbelief brought riches to the Gentiles, their future faith in Jesus as Messiah will enrich the world (cp. [Isa 2:2-4](#)).

11:16-24 The **olive tree** was a symbol of the nation of Israel. It was used in this section by Paul as an illustration or allegory of God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles. The patriarchs are represented by the **root** of the tree. The Gentiles are a **wild** graft. Pruned off **branches** are the unbelieving Jews. Salvation is by faith, and the Gentiles need to be humble about their position. Spiritual pride has no place in salvation by grace. God is able to restore the Jewish people to the place of faith. Salvation is always a miracle. It is no harder for God to save a Jew than a Gentile.

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 11".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 11:11-24

11:11ff Paul had a vision of a church where all Jewish and Gentile believers would be united in their love of God and in obedience to Christ. While respecting God's law, this ideal church would look to Christ alone for salvation. A person's ethnic background and social status would be irrelevant (see [Galatians 3:28](#)). What mattered would be his or her faith in Christ.

But Paul's vision has not yet been realized. For the most part, Jewish people have rejected the Good News. They have depended on their heritage for salvation, and they do not have the heart of obedience that was so important to the Old Testament prophets and to Paul. Once Gentiles became dominant in many of the Christian churches, they began rejecting Jews and even persecuting them. Unfortunately, this practice has recurred through the centuries.

True Christians should not persecute others. Both Gentiles and Jews have done so much to damage the cause of Christ, whom they claim to serve, that Paul's vision often seems impossible to fulfill. Yet God chose the Jews, just as he chose the Gentiles, and he is still working to unite all believers so they become a holy temple where God lives by his Spirit (see [Ephesians 2:11-22](#)).

11:13-15 Paul was appointed as an apostle to the Gentiles. He reminded his Jewish brothers and sisters of this fact, hoping that they, too, would want to be saved. The Jews rejected God's offer, and, thus, Gentiles were being offered salvation. But when a Jew comes to Christ, there is great rejoicing, as if a dead person has come back to life.

11:16-24 Speaking to Gentile Christians, Paul warns them not to feel superior because some Jews were rejected. Abraham's faith is like the root of a productive tree, and the Jewish people are the tree's natural branches. Because of faithlessness, some of the Jews have been broken off, and Gentile believers, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. Both Jews and Gentiles share the tree's nourishment based on faith in God; neither can rest on heritage or culture for salvation.

11:22 "Continue to trust in his kindness" refers to steadfast perseverance in faith. Steadfastness is a proof of the reality of faith and a by-product of salvation, not a means to it.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1914-1915.

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Romans 11:11-24

11:11 This is the tenth time in this letter that Paul has asked a question only to respond in a strong negative. No, Israel's stumbling did not cause them to **fall** so that God has declared the nation **beyond recovery**. Their blindness is not permanent ([11:8](#)); their fall is not fatal. Israel's stumbling means that **salvation** has come **to the Gentiles**. Israel's rejection of Christ was a part of God's plan all along, as essential as God's sovereign choice of Jacob over Esau ([9:10-13](#)) and his hardening of Pharaoh ([9:17-18](#)). But the salvation of the Gentiles is not the end of the story. It too has a purpose—to make the **Jews jealous**. The blessings offered to the Gentiles would spur Israel to end their hostility toward the gospel and ultimately bring them to faith. God desires to restore Israel to himself.

11:12 God took the riches that the Jews should have received and offered them to the Gentiles, who gladly received them. The **Gentiles were enriched**—those who received the gospel received great riches for eternity; and believers, in turn, have an influence for good on the rest of the world. Paul looks beyond the present to a future time when **the Jews will accept** the riches of salvation that God offers (see [11:26](#)). Israel's acceptance does not mean that the riches given to the Gentiles will be taken away; rather, when the Jews are saved, the Gentiles will enjoy even **greater** blessings along with them.

11:13-14 We can almost sense the intensity of Paul's words as he defines his audience. If we are not Jews, we know that the next words are meant for us. Paul singles out the Gentile believers to listen carefully to what he is going to say. They (and we) are being given an opportunity to understand their role in the divine plan. Paul will explain that the salvation of the **Gentiles** both depends on Israel and contributes to Israel's salvation.

All of the apostles were preaching both to Jews and non-Jews, but Paul had been specially **appointed** by God to go to the Gentiles ([Acts 9:15](#); [Galatians 2:3-10](#)). Throughout this ministry he had been a strong (and at first lone) advocate for Gentile freedom from the Jewish law. Beyond that, Paul hoped that **the Jews would want what** the Gentiles had been given, and so they would be saved. Paul hopes to cause the Jews to recognize that God greatly blessed the Gentiles when they believed in the Jews' own Messiah. The Jews might then realize that those blessings are still promised to them as part of God's covenant with them, but they can only be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. Again Paul is revealing his great desire to see his people be saved (see [9:1-3](#); [10:1](#)).

11:15 Israel's **rejection** by God meant that **God offered salvation to the rest of the world**. God had always planned to include the Gentiles, even if that meant a temporary setting aside of the Jews. When the chosen people, who were designated as the vehicles of God's blessing to the world, actually blocked that message from getting through, God made sure that the message arrived anyway. When Jews come to Christ and God accepts them back, there will be great rejoicing, as if **dead** people had come back to **life**.

Though we may not grasp all the nuances of Paul extensive argument, his purpose is unmistakable. He wants to give Gentiles every reason possible to welcome their Jewish brothers and sisters in the faith

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 619-621.

with open arms. At the same time, he wants to help his Jewish brethren reciprocate that welcome. Neither group is to claim supremacy in the church. The message is: God has made room in his family for both of you, so you must get along together.

11:16 Paul believes that Israel's refusal to accept Christ is temporary and that one day the nation will be brought back to God. He explains this in an illustration. The **roots**, obviously, are the first part of a tree, and form the "character" of the **branches**. **Abraham's** faith was like the root of a productive tree, and the Jewish people are the tree's natural branches. As a result of God's choice and Abraham's response, the nation that descended from him was **holy**.

Paul extends the principle to cover the fate of his people. If the remnant of Jews who had lived by faith were called holy by God, then there is still hope for the whole, proving that God has not rejected them. If the root, the tree of justification by faith, is holy, then any branch attached to and nourished by that root will also be holy.

11:17 God did not tear down the entire tree, but **some** of the branches were **broken off** because of sin and unbelief. These branches are Jews who failed to respond in faith to God's mercy. In their place, the Gentile believers are likened to **branches from a wild olive tree** that have been **grafted in**. Grafting involves inserting a bud or shoot of one plant into a slit in the stem or trunk of another plant. The shoot shares in the nourishment from the main stem or trunk (here pictured as **God's rich nourishment**) and grows, receiving the same blessings that the natural branches had.

11:18 But the Gentiles, the wild olive shoots who have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree (Israel), have no grounds for bragging. The Gentile "branches" need to remember that they are just as dependent on "the root," for their survival as the Jewish branches. God has not changed his original plan; salvation stems from the promise to Abraham and God's choice of Israel. Both Jews and Gentiles share the tree's nourishment based on faith in God. For Paul, the only appropriate attitude for any "branch" is humble thankfulness. Any attitude of superiority is to be avoided, for it might indicate that grafted-in branches are candidates for the same fate as the original ones that had been broken off (see [11:21](#)).

11:19 A Gentile believer might make this argument. It is true that it was necessary to break off some branches in the grafting process. But it would be a mistake to assume that Paul is limiting God's acceptance, as if there was only so much room on the tree for branches. The point is not so much replacement as opportunity. The idea is not that Jews were **broken off** so that we could take their place; but rather that they were broken off so that the Gentile opportunity for justification by faith might become clear. This is underscored by Paul's assertion that even broken off branches can be grafted back in (see [11:23](#)).

11:20 The real reason some of the branches of the tree, some of the nation of Israel, were broken off was because of their stubborn unbelief. The Gentiles that were grafted in are only there by their faith and by God's grace. Thus they are warned, **Don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen**. Those who are arrogant cherish proud thoughts about themselves; they do not have a proper fear and respect for God. Our relationship with God is to be one of humble dependence (see [12:3](#)).

Jesus used many of these images to explain his own role as the vine ([John 15:1-8](#)). He spoke of his Father, the Gardener who cuts off every branch that is unproductive. He also reminded the disciples that a branch cannot survive on its own, but is entirely dependent on the vine for its survival and nourishment. The branches serve their purpose in bearing fruit.

[11:21](#) God willingly set aside Israel because of their stumbling and blindness to the Good News. The Gentiles should remember that God will set them aside as well if they became arrogant—he will **not spare** them **either**. According to the context, it is not absolutely clear whether Paul is referring to those who have fallen away from the faith or those whose faith was never real. What is clear is that he is warning Gentiles not to arrogantly think that their being grafted in is irreversible. The only way they can remain in the tree is by continuing to trust in God’s grace.

[11:22](#) God sovereignly decided to put Israel aside for a time and offer salvation through faith to all the world. This was a **severe** act, but it was done in judgment **to those who disobeyed** ([9:32-33](#)). He has been **kind** to the Gentiles, but Gentile believers must **continue to trust in his kindness**. This refers to steadfast perseverance in faith—continual and patient dependence on Christ. Steadfastness is a proof of the reality of faith. If Gentile believers do not continue in their perseverance in faith, they **will be cut off**, just as the natural branches were cut off because of their unbelief. This does not mean individual believers can lose their salvation and be cut off from God; rather, Paul is speaking from a generalized standpoint, picturing Gentiles as a group turning away from God as the nation of Israel had. God’s sternness was demonstrated in that faith was not automatic for the chosen people; and his kindness was demonstrated in providing Gentiles with the opportunity for faith.

[11:23-24](#) Returning to Israel, Paul says if they will **turn from their unbelief, God will graft them back into the tree again**. If, contrary to nature, wild olive shoots can be grafted into a cultivated olive tree, certainly the natural branches can be grafted back into root stock of the cultivated tree. We become part of God’s “tree” by faith; we forfeit any potential relationship with God by unbelief. Gentiles are orphans graciously adopted into God’s family. A wayward Jew who discovers the faith of Abraham is coming home.

Study and Discussion Questions



Ingrafted Branches - [Romans 11:11-24](#)

Topics: [Attitude](#), [Faith](#), [Grace](#), [Humility](#), [Repentance](#), [Salvation](#), [Spiritual Rebirth](#)

Open It

1. What is your favorite fruit? Why?
2. *What success have you had with gardening?

Explore It

3. What hope do the Jews ever have of recovering their relationship with God? ([11:11](#))
4. How have Gentiles been helped by the Jews' rejection of God's salvation plan? ([11:11-12](#))
5. What will be an even greater result than just the response of the Gentiles to God's plan? ([11:12](#))
6. How did Paul hope his own Jewish people would respond when they saw him ministering to the Gentiles? ([11:13-14](#))
7. What did Paul imagine the response of the Jews to God could bring to the world? ([11:15](#))
8. *What long illustration did Paul use to describe the situation of the Jews and Gentiles? ([11:16-24](#))
9. *To what did Paul liken the Gentiles? ([11:17](#))
10. Why do we need to be careful not to boast that God has reached out to us? ([11:18](#))
11. To whom does God show severity and kindness? ([11:22](#))
12. *What is promised to Jews who do not persist in unbelief? ([11:23](#))

Get It

13. *What lessons can we draw from Paul's analogy of the olive tree?
14. How would the repentance of Israel affect the world?
15. What is significant about the fact that the Jews have stumbled but not fallen?
16. How could the kind of envy Paul described help lead a person to Christ?
17. For what reasons could a Gentile be tempted to feel superior to a Jew?
18. *What attitude should we have toward the fact that God has chosen to reach out to us?
19. How could a person miss salvation by trusting in family background or heritage?

Apply It

20. *What can you do this week to acknowledge that you depend on God's kindness?
21. What can you do this week to share Christ with a friend who is separated from God?