

The Church as an Olive Tree

Romans, Part XLII

Romans 11:16-24

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II. The Church as an Olive Tree

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Romans 11:16-24

¹⁶...[Also] if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." ²⁰Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. ²²Therefore consider the [kindness] and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, [kindness], if you continue in His [kindness]. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

A. There is One Olive Tree (cf. 1 Cor 10:1; Heb 3:1-6)

First, note that Paul insists that there is one _____ of God throughout history. Those who professed faith in Yahweh in the old covenant are *our fathers* (1 Cor 10:1) and part of the one household of faith (Heb 3:6).

B. There are Two Types of Branches

Second, notice that in this tree, in the Church of God, there are two types of branches – there are natural branches that grow on the tree and there are wild olive branches that are grafted onto the tree (17, 21, 24). In the *old covenant*, you had ethnic Jews and proselytes. In the *new covenant*, we have covenant kids and _____.

C. Branches Grow, Get Broken Off, and Get Grafted In

Third, notice that branches grow on the tree, get broken off the tree, and get grafted onto the tree. Branches grow and are grafted onto the tree *by* _____ while they are broken off *because of* _____ (20). So how does the breaking off happen historically?

1. Providential breaking off (Rev 2:5, 16, 21-23; 3:3)

First, sometimes God providentially breaks branches off. So Christ warns several churches to _____ lest He fight against them and destroy them.

2. Ecclesiastical breaking off (1 Cor 5:11-13 cf. Mt 18:17; Jn 20:23)

Second, sometimes the church breaks unfaithful branches off.

¹¹But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat

with such a person. ¹²For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? ¹³But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

Here Paul is applying Jesus’ teaching from Matthew 18. If a brother or sister is in sin and that sin is established by two or three witnesses and the brother refuses to repent, then he is to have his sin announced to the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, then he is to be to us “*like a heathen and a tax collector*” (Mt 18:17).

III. Understanding Apostasy

A. The Reality of Apostasy (cf. Heb 6:4-8)

A great majority of the Jews of Paul’s day *apostatized*. Hence, they were *broken off* from the root and fatness of the olive tree, separated from God’s covenant people. Paul is warning the Roman Christians lest they follow this same pattern (cf. 11:20b-21).

B. The Dilemma of Apostasy (cf. Jn 6:39; 10:27-30; Rom 8:29-30; Phil 1:6)

So how do we relate this warning to Paul’s emphasis on divine election and his promise that all those whom God justifies He shall most certainly glorify? Consider:

- Jn 6:39 – *This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*
- Jn 10:27-30 – *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.*

C. Distinctions Regarding Apostasy

1. Corporate and Individual Election (cf. Jn 15:1ff; Acts 8; Rom 2:28f; 9:6ff)

Scripture distinguishes between two types of election: *corporate election* and *individual election*. “*They are not all Israel who are of Israel*” (9:6). The visible Church is not a pure society composed exclusively of those *individually elect*, but a mixed company united by its public profession of Jesus as Lord. Hence, Scripture is filled with warnings to the corporately elect body of the Church lest we turn away from God.

2. Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints (cf. Mt 10:22; Heb 13:20-21)

In the Bible, the *Preservation of the saints* is wedded with the *Perseverance of the saints*. Because God *preserves* the *individually elect*, they will necessarily . *Perseverance*, therefore, is an absolute necessity; it is not optional (11:22). Paul writes:

²¹*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²²in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—²³if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard... (Col 1:21-23)*

IV. Conclusion