



Growth Group Questions
September 15, 2024
“God’s Love and Wild Olive Branches”

Context:

In Romans 11 the apostle Paul takes up the issue of the salvation of Israel, before moving to the salvation of the Gentiles. In verse 1 he asks, "Has God rejected his people?" His response is no, and he continues to unpack God’s plan for Israel throughout the chapter. God's faithfulness to Israel is God's faithfulness to us. God will keep his promises to Israel, and God will keep His promises to those have been grafted into His Kingdom.

Paul used the figure of grafting olive trees to show how “non-Jews” or “Gentiles” were able to share in the spiritual blessings of Israel. Gentile believers are described as a wild olive shoot that had been grafted into a cultivated olive tree, some of whose branches had been broken off.

The normal process of grafting called for cultivated shoots to be joined to the branches of a wild olive tree that had been cut back. The exposed ends were smeared with clay and bound with cloth. Paul reversed the process in order in Romans to illustrate the engrafting of the Gentiles (the “wild olive shoot”) into historic Israel.

The root supplies the life and sustenance to the cultivated olive tree and represents those who have gone before us. The root includes the patriarchs of the Old Testament. People like Abraham, Issac and Jacob. All who follow Jesus are now connected to them.

Paul also reminds and warns that we don’t support the root, but the root supports us. Humanity tends to often presume that our “accomplishments” are due to our own ability. A warning against this runs throughout this section which Paul articulates as well in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” Humility is always to be the mark of a disciple. We should simply be grateful that God has chosen to bring us in and “graft” us into His family.



Scripture:

Genesis 8:10-12

10He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. 11When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. 12He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

Jeremiah 11:16-17

16 The Lord called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form. But with the roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken. 17 The Lord Almighty, who planted you, has decreed disaster for you, because the people of both Israel and Judah have done evil and aroused my anger by burning incense to Baal.

Romans 11:17-24 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, 18do 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. 19You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” 20Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 22Consider 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. 23And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24After 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!

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 11:18 (The Message)

Remember, you aren't feeding the root; the root is feeding you.

Psalms 52:8-9

8But I am like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of God;
I trust in God's unfailing love
for ever and ever.
9 For what you have done I will always praise you
in the presence of your faithful people.
And I will hope in your name,
for your name is good.



Questions:

1. What is the significance of the olive tree in the Bible? What Bible verses speak to this significance?
2. In agriculture, what is grafting and why is it done?
3. In Romans 11:17, the Apostle Paul says, “. . . 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.” What does that mean to you?
4. Why do you think the Apostle Paul used the image of “grafting” to describe how we have been joined with God?
5. The Apostle Paul speaks of God’s sternness and God’s kindness in Romans 11:22. Why is it important that we both understand and acknowledge this two-fold nature of God?
6. In the MESSAGE translation of Romans 11:18, it says: “Remember, you aren’t feeding the root; the root is feeding you.” What does that mean to you? What are the implications of this verse for our lives?
7. In Psalm 52:8, King David writes, “But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God.” God wants us to have flourishing lives in Him. What does it mean to have a flourishing life in God?
8. What does it mean to be rooted in Jesus? What does it look like?

Pastor Paul’s Reflection Questions:

1. What’s feeding your soul right now? Are you being shaped by Jesus or something else?
2. Is there someone you know who is “stuck” and God may be prompting you to help them in their situation?

