Romans 11, 11-24

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Lesson: God Never Gives Up

When would God give up?

- He created the universe for us to love Him.
- He purged all of creation to give those who loved Him a chance to start over.
- He gave up His beloved son to die so that we would love Him.
- When would God give up on either Jews or Gentiles?

Never. He never gives up.

The love we have for our children and our own loved ones, is a tiny flame compared to the flaming beacon of God's love.

Our love is diluted by our own selfish and self-centered perspectives, and our own frustrations and pride. God's love isn't.

- There are parents who give up on their children, and who have disowned them.
- There are children that have failed so many times and committed so many horrible acts that their parents have given up on them.
- There are children that have told their parents that they do not love them, and who have acted against their parents, until those parents gave up on them.
- There are children who are drawn again and again to sinful acts or addictions to the point where they are unrecognizable as the people they once were, and there are parents of those children that have finally given up.

And there are parents, for each of these situations that – despite everything, have not given up. They hold onto their children hoping or praying that they will choose to return to the lives they could have any time they choose.

When we see those parents, the ones that still hold onto hope, we have a tiny glimpse of the love that God has for all of us. The love burns as long as we are alive to choose Him. We see those people and we are amazed that they do not give up and we don't

remember God, and how much greater and stronger His love is for all of us. No matter what we've done or where we came from.

While God reaches out through His messengers like Paul, there are two groups of people that actively work against Him.

The first group of people that are working against God are those who have already come forward and received salvation. This group begrudges those who have not yet accepted Jesus as savior and views them as opponents rather than brothers and sisters to be saved. They are looking down on the Jews who have not yet accepted Jesus, and twisting Paul's words while they sit on the sidelines, when they should be joining him in the rescue.

The second group of people working against God are the unsaved. They feel strength in their numbers. The more people they can convince that Paul's message is wrong, for any reason, the more secure they feel in rejecting God. We always feel more comfortable when there are large numbers of people that agree with us.

Paul is trying to reach as many people as he can, and he's working against both the saved who begrudge others and the unsaved who count every saved person as a loss.

Some of the Gentile believers are already looking down on the Jews who have not believed. And many of the Jews are finding comfort in their numbers, treating every new convert as a loss. Paul is trying to win over both groups and every word he writes is being picked apart by both sides.

Romans 11:11-16 (KJV)

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

In verse 11, Paul addresses a question that still exists today. Since the Jews stumbled, failing to recognize Jesus as their awaited Messiah, and even calling for Him to be killed, shouldn't God just reject them, and let them completely fall?

He answers his hypothetical question in his usual way, "God forbid"

He is trying to shut down those who argue for just giving up on the holdout Jews.

There are people today who use the Jew's crucifixion of Jesus to hate all Jews, but Jesus wasn't crucified only for the Jews, He was crucified to save all who would later choose Him.

Paul hopes that seeing the gift of God’s love being shared with Gentiles might spur the holdout Jews. Paul isn't encouraging the Jews to be jealous of the Gentiles. Jealousy is a negative behavior. A truer translation indicates that he is hoping the Jews will be stirred to rivalry or to emulate the Gentiles who have already been saved.

Romans 11:12-16 (KJV)

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Paul is like a stage performer that's trying to keep as many plates spinning on rods as he can. He's trying to unfold a single counter-intuitive divine strategy. Israel's unbelief opened the path for Gentiles to be included in God's family. He's then using the Gentile's inclusion to spur Israel's restoration. He's saying there is hope for Israel.

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

Paul writes that if those remnant Jews that have accepted Jesus already are holy, that, they, like the first grains that are ground in a season, will form the basis for those who follow. Paul expresses his hope that the early converts will be the basis for more.

Then Paul introduces the metaphor of a tree's roots and branches for the next verses.

Romans 11:17-22 (KJV)

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Paul's admonition to the Gentiles becomes even clearer in verses 17-22. He writes of the Gentiles as being like branches of a wild olive tree that have been grafted onto a cultured healthy olive tree. He instructs the Gentiles not to speak down against the Jews because they are like the original branches of the cultivated tree that were broken off.

The Gentiles are feeling superior to the Jews because they've now been added into God's family, the very place that Jews once held. The Jews were broken off and the Gentiles have taken their place, but Paul doesn't want the Gentiles to celebrate the Jew's downfall. He wants the Gentiles to recognize that it is because

of their faith that they are now close to God, but that they must take care that the same God that did not hold back from cutting away natural branches could also remove them.

These are very scary warnings:

- "thou standest by faith"
- "Be not highminded, but fear"
- "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee"
- "if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"

But we know that once a person is truly saved, that no one can snatch them out of God's hand.

John 10:28-29 (KJV)

> 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
>
> 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

The warning is not that God is looking for an excuse to remove someone He has truly saved. The warning is that salvation is by faith, not by membership in the right group, and that faith is not arrogant.

Those who are truly of the root will not boast against the branches that were broken off; they will fear God and continue in His kindness.

The same faithfulness of God that keeps His promises to Israel is the faithfulness that keeps His people in Christ. Those who are truly grafted in by faith will heed the warning and continue; those who ignore it show that their standing was only external.

We can fall prey to these same failures. We are not saved because we are superior to others in any way. We're saved through our faith in Jesus. We do not serve God's plan for the salvation of men by looking down on others.

Romans 11:23-24 (KJV)

> 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.

> 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?

Paul wants the saved Gentiles to maintain their hope for the Jews. That hope should drive those who have been saved, whether Jew or Gentile, to continue reaching out to the unsaved. Paul writes that of course if God is able to graft wild olive branches onto Himself that it is a simple matter to restore branches that were previously part of His chosen family.

It is only the unbelief of the Jews, or in fact any group, that stands in their way. God does not force anyone to belief, He enables belief and each person chooses to hold onto their belief, or to turn it loose.

John 3:16

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 6:40

> And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Romans 10:9-13

> That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
>
> For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
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> For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.
>
> For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.
>
> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.