

The grace of ingrafted Branches

In every generation, He has raised up believers in Jesus Christ, just as He raised up the 7,000 in Elijah's time. And the day will come when Israel and the whole world will worship God at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Today's message is that the attitude of saved Gentiles should be one of humility.

Verse 13. I am talking to you Gentiles. In as much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry

14. in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

15. For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

This is a repeat of what we learned last time. The apostle Paul wanted his people, Israel to be saved. This is because Israel will feel envy when they see the Gentiles being blessed and will come to salvation. Also, Israel's salvation will be a great joy like the resurrection of the dead.

Next is verse 16, which is the most difficult part of today's scripture, but once it is explained to you, you will understand.

16. If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

This is a quotation from Numbers 15:17-21. In Old Testament times, the people were to offer the firstfruits of the earth as an offering of thanksgiving before God. The people used to make sweets from the first ears of grain and offer them to God. This symbolizes the sanctification of all the people's offerings through the offering of the first ears to God.

Thus, if we compare the ritual of the firstfruits to the nation of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the ancestors of the Israelites, correspond to the firstfruits and roots. And their descendants, Israel, are equivalent to the kneading powder and the branches. The content is that just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sanctified, so naturally Israel was sanctified. It is an appeal to the legitimacy of Israel as God's people.

Next, verses 17-19 are a parable of the grafted branch. It refers to the salvation of the Gentiles.

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.

19. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.

The passage describes a wild olive branch being grafted in place of a branch that was cut off from a cultivated olive tree. I imagine that Mr. Tsutomu, who used to be a gardener, would have explained the wonder of grafting in an easy way. Anyway, everyone, please listen with your imagination.

The grafting of a wild olive branch onto a cultivated olive tree is a blessing for the wild tree. The grafted branch now receives abundant nutrients from the roots. Here the wild olive branch should not boast of being a folded branch, because nothing has been done to it. Like this, by grace we have been saved, not by works. **Ephesians 2:8~9** "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Our salvation is only grace. The mistake we Christians make is to think, "I am saved because I believe," and that becomes new deeds and works. We should be humble with gratitude and admiration for having been saved without doing anything. We need to be humble to unbelievers about our salvation by grace of God.

20. Granted. 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.

Here, the 'natural branches' are the Israelites. Israel was not forgiven not to believe in Jesus. If the Gentiles who believe now will not believe in Jesus later, God will likewise judge them as He did Israel. This content should not be misunderstood as a change in our salvation. But we can learn this meaning from **1 Corinthians 10:12**. The Apostle Paul says, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall." and that we should always have humble faith because we have been saved by grace.

22. Consider 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.

The Apostle Paul teaches us to consider both the mercy and sternness of God. For the fallen Israel, God showed severity. But to the Gentiles who believed in Jesus, God showed mercy. Let us consider God's sternness and mercy for a moment. It is similar to a parent giving a whip when teaching a child. **Titus 1:9** "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can refute those who oppose it."

And the Apostle Paul encouraged the Gentile Christians to humbly continue to believe in the gospel.

23. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24. After 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!

This word means that if Israel repents of their unbelief and has faith, they will be grafted in and saved. God is able to invite Israel back to salvation. It is easier for Israel to be saved if they repent and believe than it is for the Gentiles to be invited to salvation. Jesus said in **Mark 10:31**, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Our lives are reversed by God's grace. If any of you are feeling miserable, saying, 'I have fallen. I am broken.' God will mercifully change your life. On the contrary, when you are unaware of your sins and the grace of Jesus Christ, God our Lord will discipline you continually.

Finally, we remind the teaching that Jesus is the vine tree and we are the branches from learning today's text. Jesus our Lord told us **John 15:5**. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." We bear much fruit abundantly by being connected to Jesus Christ. I always was interested how I could effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers around me. And I realized from Romans 11 that one of the ways is to have my life abundantly blessed by God. This blessing extends to everything: spiritual, physical, social, etc. Here is why our lives should also be blessed by God.

For example, in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, we can become a personality like to Jesus Christ. **Galatians 5:22-23** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." The fruit of the Spirit transforms us into great personalities like Jesus. God transforms us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The next blessing is for our lives in general. **3 John, verse 2**: "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." God wants our souls and our daily lives to be blessed.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you for the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, help us to be more and more aware of the seriousness of our own sin and to know more deeply the grace of the Cross. And bless us in every way and invite our as yet unbelieving family and friends into salvation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.