

## Introducing the Metaphors (11:16)

*11:16 If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.*

- The “*dough*” metaphor is an allusion to Numbers 15:17-21.

### What is “*the Root*”?

- Most commentators identify “*the root*” as God’s saving work through “*the promises*” (9:4) given to “*the fathers*” (9:5) that “*the Christ*” would come to save God’s people. At its most basic form, the promise is “*in [Abraham] all the families of the earth will be blessed*” (Genesis 12:3). This is fulfilled in the Son of Abraham, Jesus Christ, Who was “*slain, and purchased for God with [His] blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9).
- Galatians 3 is so important to a right interpretation of the Bible! It teaches us that the foundational (“*root*”!) promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Christ and in those united to Christ by faith:  
READ Galatians 3:8,9,14,16,29.<sup>1</sup>

## Don’t Make Salvation an Idol (11:17-22)

*11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. 11:19 You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” 11:20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 11:21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you,*

*God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.*

### Who Are the Branches?

- Israel as an “*olive tree*” is an Old Testament metaphor (Jeremiah 11:16-19; Hosea 14:6,7).
- The “*olive tree*” is the people of God living by faith in God’s promise to Abraham, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ – the “*olive tree*” is both “*wild olive*” (non-Jews) and “*natural branches*” (Jews) who believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah. They are one in connection with God’s past promise to Abraham and His complete fulfilling of that promise in His Son.
- Ethnic Israelites (“*according to the flesh*”) who believed in Jesus as Messiah (Christ) remained connected to “*the root,*” that is, spiritual or true Israel.

### Jeremiah and the Breaking Off of Branches

- READ Jeremiah 11:14-17. Those who grew naturally out of the line of Abraham are broken off because of their unbelief and unfaithfulness to God. Compare with Matthew 3:7-10//Luke 3:7-9.

### Do Not Be Arrogant: Election and Humbleness

- READ Deuteronomy 7:6-11. The moment we think that God’s gracious election of us unto salvation is because of anything good or worthy in us, our faith is not in His promises of salvation through Jesus Christ, but in ourselves. This is idolatry.

### The Kindness and Severity of God

- READ 1 Corinthians 10:1-17, especially vs. 12. Paul’s warning here in Romans 11 echoes the warning in 1 Corinthians 10.
- “The kindness of God cannot be truly appreciated as a gift of His grace unless the severity of God is contemplated as the just penalty for forsaking Him.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:8 quotes from Genesis 12:3; 3:16 quotes from Genesis 13:15; 17:7,8; 28:4,13; 35:12.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Shreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), pg. 608.

### Fear: The Purpose of Gospel Warnings

- **Godly fear is the antidote to a pride which would lead us to abandon the Gospel.**
- How are we to understand warnings like “*if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off*” (11:22)? Didn’t we rejoice in the promise of a few chapters ago that nothing “*will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (8:39)? Now we read of being “*cut off.*” How are we to understand these warnings?

### Jesus’ Three Categories

- Jesus, in His parable of the sower, gives us three responses to the Word of God:
  - Those who reject the Word (Matthew 13:4,19//Mark 4:4,15// Luke 8:5,12).
  - Those who receive the Word and are fruitful in their lives (Matthew 13:8,23// Mark 4:8,20//Luke 8:8,15).
  - Those who seem to respond to the Word, but ultimately choose the world over the Word (Matthew 13:5-7,20-22// Mark 4:5-7,16-19//Luke 8:6,7,13,14). Make a list of those things that pull people away from faithfulness. Are you on guard against those things in your life?

### “Once Saved, Always Saved,”

#### OR the Perseverance/Preservation of the Saints?

- While “once saved, always saved” is a catchy statement, it does not reflect the biblical witness or Baptist belief.<sup>3</sup> The Bible does not offer false

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<sup>3</sup> “All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end” (*Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, V).

assurance or comfort to those who are denying a Christian confession; it issues severe warnings to bring true believers back to a life in line with their confession.

- Those who leave were never really one of us. READ 1 John 2:19.
- We do not just receive grace at the beginning of our salvation, but must continually rely solely on God’s grace at every moment.

### Salvation by Faith Alone (11:23,24)

11:23 *And they also, if they [Jewish unbelievers] do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.*  
11:24 *For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?*

#### Leaving the House of the Faithless

- On unbelief: Romans 3:3; 4:20; Hebrews 3:12,19.
- READ Hosea 14:1-7.

#### God Is Able

- READ 1:16. “*Power*” in 1:16 and “*able*” in 11:23 are the same Greek word. God’s ability and power is exercised through the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed.

#### Returning Home

- Those Jews who come to faith in Jesus as Messiah are truly entering their birthright – remember that true “Jewishness” comes by faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28,29; Philippians 3:2,3).
- I always remember (and sometimes pray) the plea of the desperate father to Jesus, “*I do believe; help my unbelief*” (Mark 9:24).

**Always live by God’s grace which is ours by faith in Jesus.  
Never consider anyone outside of God’s ability to save.  
Never boast in anything but God’s unmerited grace.**