



Stand by Faith

“... because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee” (Romans 11:20-21).

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“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. 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted 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 grafted 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” (Romans 11:13-22).

Introduction

Romans 11 is one of the Apostle Paul's most profound teachings concerning God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles. In our text, Paul uses the illustration of an olive tree to explain God's mercy, His justice, and the necessity of humility and perseverance in the Christian life.

This passage reminds believers that salvation is entirely by God's grace, yet those who receive that grace must continue in faith, humility and obedience. It is a solemn warning against spiritual pride and complacency. The Apostle Paul reminds believers in 1 Corinthians 10:12 *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”* This message remains just as relevant today in an age when many profess Christianity but neglect the fear of God. We will delve into this study by considering eight points:

- 1) God Gives Every Believer a Divine Calling
- 2) God Can Use Your Faithfulness to Save Others
- 3) God's Rejection Is Never His Final Word
- 4) Salvation Is Entirely by Grace
- 5) Pride Has No Place in the Christian Life
- 6) Faith, Not Heritage, Keeps Us Standing
- 7) Never Become Spiritually Complacent
- 8) God's Character Includes Both Goodness and Severity

1. God Gives Every Believer a Divine Calling

Romans 11:13 *“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”* Paul never apologised for his calling. Instead, he glorified God by faithfully carrying out the ministry entrusted to him. Likewise, every Christian has been entrusted with a divine assignment.

- **Ephesians 2:10** *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*
- **1 Peter 4:10** *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to*

another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Moses initially doubted his calling (Exodus 3–4), yet when he obeyed, God used him to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage.

As a surgeon who refuses to perform operations wastes years of training and deprives patients of healing; Likewise, a Christian who neglects God's calling deprives others of the blessings God intended to bring through him.

2. God Can Use Your Faithfulness to Save Others

Romans 11:14 *"If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."* Paul desired that the salvation of the Gentiles would stir Israel to seek Christ. God often uses one person's transformed life to awaken another, as per these scriptures:

- **Matthew 5:16** *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*
- **1 Peter 2:12** *"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

Ruth was drawn to the God of Israel through the faithful life of Naomi. Many people first become interested in Christianity not through arguments but through observing Christians who display integrity, forgiveness, compassion and joy under pressure.

3. God's Rejection Is Never His Final Word

Romans 11:15–16 *"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? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches."* God disciplined Israel, yet He did not abandon His covenant purposes.

- **Lamentations 3:31–32** *"For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies."*
- **Psalms 89:34** *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."*

God's discipline is intended to restore rather than destroy. Peter denied Christ three times, yet the risen Lord restored him and made him a pillar of the early Church.

4. Salvation Is Entirely by Grace

Romans 11:17 *"And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;"* The Gentiles were not naturally part of God's covenant people but were graciously grafted into God's family.

- **Ephesians 2:12–13** *"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."*
- **John 15:5** *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

Every blessing we enjoy flows from Christ alone. A branch separated from the tree soon withers. Likewise, believers who cease abiding in Christ gradually lose spiritual vitality.



5. Pride Has No Place in the Christian Life

Romans 11:18 *"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee."* Paul warns Gentile believers against arrogance. Pride remains one of Satan's greatest weapons.

- **Proverbs 16:18** *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."*
- **James 4:6** *"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."*

Nebuchadnezzar boasted of his greatness until God humbled him. History is filled with businesses, governments and famous personalities that collapsed because leaders believed they were beyond accountability. Pride blinds people to danger.

6. Faith, Not Heritage, Keeps Us Standing

Romans 11:19–20 *"Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:"* Standing before God depends upon continuing faith.

- **Hebrews 11:6** *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*
- **2 Corinthians 5:7** *"(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)"*
- **Habakkuk 2:4** *"...but the just shall live by his faith."*

Faith is not merely believing once; it is continually trusting and obeying God. Abraham became the father of the faithful because he trusted God throughout his life.

7. Never Become Spiritually Complacent

Romans 11:21 *"For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."* Paul warns believers against complacency.

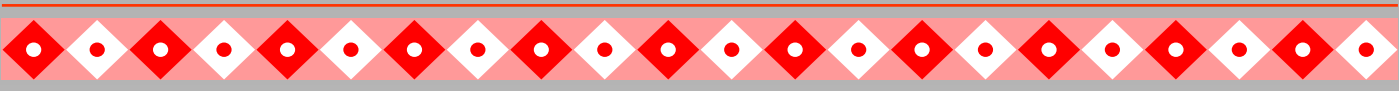
- **Philippians 2:12** *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."*
- **Hebrews 3:12** *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."*

The Christian life requires vigilance until the end. A skilled airline pilot never assumes that experience alone guarantees a safe flight. Before every journey, detailed safety checks are carried out because complacency can have catastrophic consequences. Likewise, believers must continually examine themselves before God.

8. God's Character Includes Both Goodness and Severity

Romans 11:22 *"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."* Many people like to speak only of God's love while ignoring His holiness and justice. Paul insists that both are equally true.

- **Psalms 89:14** *"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."*
- **Hebrews 12:28–29** *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: **For our God is a consuming fire.**"*
- **John 15:6** *"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."*



God delights in showing mercy, yet He also judges persistent unbelief and rebellion. The same God who spared Noah judged the world by the Flood. The same God who delivered Israel judged unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness. His goodness and severity operate together in perfect righteousness.

A loving judge who never punished crime would soon destroy society. Genuine goodness includes justice. Likewise, God's holiness requires Him to deal righteously with sin while extending mercy to those who repent.

Conclusion

Paul's illustration of the olive tree is both comforting and sobering. It teaches that:

1. God graciously calls people into His family.
2. Every blessing we enjoy comes through His grace alone.
3. Faith must be accompanied by humility.
4. Pride leads to destruction.
5. Believers must persevere in faith.
6. God's love never cancels His holiness.
7. God's goodness should inspire gratitude, while His severity should produce reverent fear.

The Christian life is therefore not one of presumption but of humble dependence upon Christ. As the Lord Jesus Himself declared in John 15:4–5 *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

And the Apostle Jude concludes with this wonderful assurance in Jude 24–25 *"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for grafting us into Your family through the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep us humble, steadfast in faith, and continually abiding in Christ. Guard us from pride, unbelief and complacency. Help us to reflect both Your goodness and Your holiness in our daily lives, so that others may be drawn to the Saviour. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit to persevere faithfully until the day we stand before You. We ask these things in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.