

Romans 11:16-24 - The Story of the Olive Tree – 19 August 2012

It is one of my deep convictions that the people of God need the Word of God and so, the preaching of God's Word must not just be around God's Word but it must be into the Word of God. After all, we are not here gathered to hear man's opinion or what is fashionable or trendy, we are here to hear the eternal Word of God, it is the bread of life. And so, it is with excitement that we can come now to Romans 11:16-24. These words will be the basis of thinking this morning. So, turn with me, if you have your Bibles, I think it's great, if you could look at it in your physical Bible or even in your electronic Bibles, right in front of you, you can see the verses in context, you can check for yourself. So, I will encourage you this morning as you look at Romans 11:16-24 that you have it right before you.

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For, if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy and if the root be holy, so are the branches and if some of the branches be broken off

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.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted 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 grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

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This is God's Word.

The book of Romans, declare the righteousness of God. Paul begins as such, Romans: 1:16. He's here to preach about the righteousness of God, given freely and graciously to sinful man. You see, the problem of sin is it deeply profound one. Sin has separated us from God and sin has also incapacitated us, insomuch whilst we know that we are separated from God, we have no ability to return to God. So, it has separated man and it has also incapacitated man and when man is hopeless and helpless, this is where the grace of God is bright and magnificent. God in his mercy gave us, His Son Jesus that on the cross, He would bear away our sins. But God, commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And because of Jesus, and because of what He has done on the cross, salvation is given to man and in the words of apostle John, he that has the Son, have life, and he that have not the Son of God, hath not life.

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This is the Gospel, this is the good news, this is the saving grace of Jesus Christ and those who believe in Christ are richly blessed. They had the forgiveness of sins, they have to peace with God, no more any means, fully reconciled. According to Romans 8, we will never be condemned. We now adopted as His children, we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ. We are joint account holders of the riches of eternity. The Bible tells us we are forever loved and nothing shall separate us from the love of God. He that has the Son, has life and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.

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Sadly, the nation of Israel, has largely, rejected the Son. Though they were originally, the nation God has chosen, yet by and large, they had rejected the Son of God and he that hath not the Son of God, therefore, hath not life. They are set aside from the blessings, they are found only in Jesus Christ. And the question now before us is, since, they have not believe in Jesus, and they have been set aside from blessings in Jesus, is God going now to give up on them ? Will God forsake His people, will God

abandoned Israel ? That was question, we looked at the last time we explored the book of Romans. And Paul is very clear about the answer.

In Romans 11:11,

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? (Added by Pastor: Have they tripped up so much that they will never be restored again, they are permanently set aside. Paul's answer is clear) God forbid: (Added by Pastor: absolutely not, God is not going to forsake Israel, but you say, what is happening then, why is Israel now set aside? This is the genius, the wisdom and the sovereignty of God. He says, no, I am not going to forsake Israel, but look at this,) but rather through their fall salvation (Added by Pastor: this is the word trespass, through the sins, through their rejection of Jesus, salvation) is come unto the Gentiles, (Added by Pastor: your loss is now our gain, God allowed Israel to be set aside, so that Gentiles, you and I, Chinese, Indians, Americans, whoever we are, the Gentiles can have, the privilege and blessings of salvation and this, in a wonderful way will result in the jealousy, provoked amongst the Jews and when they are provoked to jealousy, they would come the great day, where a great number of Israelites would come to Jesus Christ)

In Romans 11:11,

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.

You see, that is already prophesied in Scriptures.

Zechariah 12:10 tells us

And they, that is the house of David, the people of Israel, they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced.

Zechariah 12:10

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,

And likewise in

Zec 13:1

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

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Will God forsake Israel? Absolutely not. Our God is a faithful God, that even when we are unfaithful, He remains faithful. And so, what do we say to these things? He says, when the Jews are saved in great numbers, they would bring great blessings to the entire world. This is the reasoning, if when they fell, blessings of salvation come to the Gentiles, in a wonderful way. Can you imagine, when they come in great numbers, what kind of a blessing it will be.

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In summary, this is what we learnt. With the fall of Israel, there is a setting aside of the people. But it is not permanent, there is a reason, it is purposeful. With the setting aside, there will now arrive to the world, the Gentiles, the riches of God. And when the riches of God is clearly manifest amongst the Gentiles nations, there will be a provoking of jealousy amongst the Israelites that they were now say, we want to come to Jesus. There will be a salvation of Israel and there will eventually result in worldwide blessings. And this is what Paul says, "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?"

Romans 11:15

As far as the Gospel is concerned, the Israelites are like dead. Very few are coming to Jesus, but when that day comes, the provoking of jealousy is complete, it would be like a resurrection day. It's like rise from the dead. Great numbers will be saved. Is there a future for Israel? Absolutely yes, and it would be a far more glorious day than in the days gone by. And so, we return to this original question, I say then, have they stumbled, have Israel fallen, in a permanent way, that they would never be included in the saving grace of God? God forbid, absolutely not, God is going to remain faithful.

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If you are an Israelite, if you are a Jew today, you should rejoice, that's hope for your people. But you say, pastor none of us here, is a Jew. Let me say this, the application is equally precious. The same God of Israel is the God you believe in today and He

will remain faithful to you. Will God forsake? No, there was be so many more Jews will come to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

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Paul is a great teacher and in order to seal these points into the minds of his readers, he is going to provide two examples and the two examples are what we have read of just now in verses 16-24.

The first example is that of a dough. You want to make pizza, you want to have a bread, you want to, what ever you do, you have a dough and this is the illustration used by Paul. He says, in verse 16

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy; This takes reference from numbers 15:20, familiar to the Jews. When you have a dough, they would have to offer an initial portion as an act of worship to God. So, out of the big lump, you pinch is small lump, and you say, God this belongs to you and it is a symbol, that the rest actually also belongs to God. Maybe, a similar concept of the firstfruits offering, similar concept maybe to tithing, the as we give it 10%, it represents all really, belongs to God.

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So, Paul is here saying, there is a firstfruit, a small initial portion, that is dedicated to God, that belongs to God, he refers, if you look at the context of Romans 9-11, it refers to the patriarchs, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob. The Jewish nation, their fathers, they belong to God and therefore, you can expect more to come. The initial portion, the first lump, is given to God, there will be many more will come. So, the rationale, the illustration a simple.

If you still don't get it, and I think, maybe we still don't get it, Paul gives you another example and that is the olive tree, the olive tree. And the Bible says, and if the root be holy, so are the branches. Again, similar concept, the initial bunch , the initial group of people, who trusted the Lord, they being the Jewish fathers, are a preparation or a premonition or a kind of a sampling, the tells us, there will be many more, the branches, many more Jews, who will come to believe in Jesus Christ and the included in the saving grace of God.

So, the lesson of the dough and the olive tree is this, "More is to come." Is God going to give up on Israel? No, more is to come. This week, I was with my son in a shopping

mall and in the shopping mall there, there is this fountain, musical fountain where, and by and by, water will squirt up, there will be music and there will be psychedelic lights going all around the place, and as a child, my son loves this. So, he drags me, and he says, I want to see the water fountain, I want to see the water fountain, and that's where we went. So, we set at the ledge, I was reading my notes, he was looking at the water fountains. Now, this what the fountain is a little bit unusual, in that it is very unpredictable. This fountain is found in the eco-mall. Eco-mall, means it's a green mall, it's energy-saving, is supposed to be very environmentally friendly and so, I think even this is operated based on, I don't know whether there's enough sunshine or enough whatever. So, is not exactly predictable. So, we waited there for you long time, at times, hoping that the show would come on. Sometimes, it comes on, sometimes it doesn't. But it doesn't matter, my son is content that waiting for it. I would just wait with him.

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Now, after several rounds, he began to be able to predict, when the waters would come on. By the way, do you know at this is? Wah, very clever second service. Yes, it is City Square Mall, the first eco-mall in Singapore and we were there and after a while, Shawn was able to predict when the lights would come on, when the water would start to spray and when the show would start. So he would, daddy, daddy, is coming, and I said no lah, there is no movement. And sure enough, Shawn is proven right. And I asked him, Shaun, how do you know is coming on? He says, daddy, look, look, look, and he pointed me to the center of the fountain and there was a spray of mist. It's a harbinger, is a predictor of something that will come later. When there is a spray of mist, soon enough, the show would come on. When there is no spray of mist, is not going to come anytime soon. So, whenever Shawn saw the spray of mist, he says, there is more to come.

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The lesson is clear. When you see the first lump, the first Jewish people, belong to God, God is saying, that is more to come. When you see the roots, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, they belong to God, there is more to come. Has God forsaken Israel? God forbid ! More, in fact is to come. This olive tree illustration, is the main illustration Paul is emphasizing in this book or in this portion of Scriptures. So, let's look a little bit more at this olive tree shall we?

Time stamp in audio 0:16:34.1.

The olive tree is a beautiful picture and today, if you could remember the lessons of the olive tree, it would do your soul great good. The olive tree is a familiar tree in the nation of Israel. It's valuable, it's precious, it's familiar and the imagery of the tree representing the people of God is prominent. Is written by Haggai, it's written by Habakkuk and they refer, and the Israelites will be familiar, about how the tree represents the people of God.

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Looking at the verses, we see number one, that the roots, as I emphasized again, represents, the Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Now, it does not represent the Esau. Not all Israel, is true Israel, Romans 9:6. These are the people, amongst the Jews, who have believed in the Messiah, in the Savior. They are the people of faith out of the initial Jewish nation. So, if the roots, represent the Jewish believers, the patriarchs, what does this whole tree represent. The tree, really represents the people of God. Whether you are a Jew or whether you are a Gentile, the eventual olive tree represents, the people of God, Jewish believers, Gentile believers. Both, under the same umbrella, both, included in the people of God.

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So, you don't have to separate trees, you don't have a Jewish tree, and then a Gentile tree. The people of God is not separated like this, we are all part of the same family. Jews are Gentile, because you are in Christ, you are in one body, so, one tree. But this tree, is going to undergo some changes, from now till then, when Jesus comes again. What changes you say? Well, from the time of the Jews, there is first a breaking off of the branches. So, initially, the tree, seems to be largely Jewish. But, there comes a time where the Jewish branches are broken off. Why are they broken off you say?, Paul tells us, because of unbelief. They will not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, they will not. And because of that, they are broken off, they are shown up to be non-believers, they are shown up to be not part of true Israel.

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Let me ask you, then, stop to think. What these, would have remained behind. Those that? ... All right, that's a great answer. Those who do not believe are broken off, those who believe are remaining. And this refers to the Jewish people who believe in Jesus. Now, they would be, those during Elijah's time, the 7000 who refused to bow their knees to Baal, they would be those who during the the Book of Acts, are coming

to Jesus in great numbers, thousands upon thousands. These would be the Jewish remnants was true believers. But the rest, will be broken off.

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But after they are broken off, the Jewish loss has become the Gentiles gains. And so, the Bible tells us, the Gentile branches would be grafted in and this is what is said in verse 24,

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild; we are by nature not part of the Jewish economy, where God primarily spread His blessings, so if we were of the wild olive tree, during this age of grace, God is going to grasp this wild olive tree branch, into the original natural, olive tree. And this is what happens. But, there will come a day, according to Paul where the Jewish branches will be re-grafted in. So, the eventual composition of this olive tree, is very different from the day it started. There is remodeling that has taken place. Jewish unbelievers broken off, Gentile believers grafted in and there will come a time where the Jewish people will be re-grafted in. And you must expect it, because this is the reasoning and rationale of Paul.

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He says,

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, when Israel, will come and turn to Jesus again, then, they shall be grafted in, for God is able, powerful, the word that these dunamis, ah, dynos??. God is able to graft them in again. In fact, you must, surely expected it, because, he says,

24 how much more shall these, which be the natural branches.....

If God could graft the wild olive branch into the natural tree, isn't it more expected, that the natural branches should be graft back. The Gentiles can be saved today, is in a more natural, more reasonable that the Jewish people can be saved ? That's his reasoning.

Suppose, today, you share the Gospel with a Jew. Let me say this, I believe, if you share with a Jew, most of the time, this is the main problem, they were not believe Jesus as the promised Messiah. This is the one thing they are hung up over. They cannot get past Jesus is the promised Messiah. And if you get that across, if they

understand that, and the Spirit of God works in their hearts, if they grasp that, they will be saved. But if you speak today to a Chinese, never been to church, never grew up in Sunday school, you telling Jesus is the Messiah, he says alright, but he's not saved, because, there may be other things he has not understood, he doesn't know who is God. To him, the concept of God is the idols he has worshipped in the past. He doesn't know what is sin, he says, I have never hurt anybody, as long as I don't disturb people, as long as I don't kill anyone, I am fine, they do not understand sin.

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So, there are many things the Gentiles do not grasp; but the Jews do. The Jews understand God, the Jews understand the Word of God, the Jews understand the ceremonies, the Jews have been exposed to these things and it is so reasonable. How much more shall God graft in the natural branches into the natural, good olive tree. Are you lost? I hope not. But, here it is, I think, preaching is not just telling a story. I think preaching, is not just describing, what the Bible is saying, I think, preaching must be applicatory. And, here it is, let us learn from this olive tree lessons to apply for our lives.

There are lessons in the Bible, by the way, just by hearing these past 20, 30 minutes, you probably know more about world history than the history textbook can tell you because, this is the real history from God's perspective. World War II, I think those are important, but this is what matters. It's a panoramic view, of the sovereign workings of God throughout this world. But I'm not here as a history teacher, we are here to understand theology and from this passage, from the story of the olive tree, we are able to find lessons for us, to know about God, about grace, about the Gospel and about godliness. So, let's go.

What are the lessons, we can seek to apply, as we understand the olive tree. Can I say very simply, first of all, the olive tree, teaches us, that every man is saved by grace and not race. It's clear teaching. You're not in this tree because you are a Jew, you're not in this tree because you are a Gentile. You are in this tree, because of God's grace.

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No man is saved by his race, no man is saved because ethnically, he is closer to God. Everyone is saved by grace. You see, the Jew cannot boast, I am a Jew and therefore, I'm saved. The Jew cannot say, I am circumcised and therefore I am saved. The Jew cannot say, I have all this religious rituals and therefore, I am saved. He can boast in nothing he does, he can boast in nothing in himself. No man is saved because his

father is a Christian, no man is saved because your grandfather is a pastor, no man is saved because you are baptized when you were a baby, nobody is saved because you are circumcised as a child. It doesn't matter, how many times you have been to church, it doesn't matter, how many times you have memorized the Bible, we are all saved by grace. It is not what we have done that is what Jesus has done.

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Salvation is not what you achieved, but salvation is what you received; it's all of grace, not of works. If you have been here in church, worshiping for a long long time, you grew up in the Christian home and that is your security, let me say this, fear, because God is able to break you off the tree, if you stand not in faith, because we are all in this tree by grace. And you know what, if you are truly conscious about grace, if you truly conscious about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, it should humble you. I didn't say this, Paul said this. Paul says, because we are all in this tree by grace, no man, no gentile and may I say, even in the future, no Jew, can boast against the branches, there is no place for high-mindedness, there is no place for pride. The grace, the Gospel of grace, slays pride. In fact, if you want to be saved, you cannot be proud, if you want to be saved, you have got to be humble before God, because grace is received, in humility.

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I am reminded of a story in the Bible, familiar to you, I refer to this picture so many times, because it is such, a short parable, but succinct and powerful, isn't it. Then, in the story was a publican, a publican and a Pharisee. They both went to the temple to pray and the Pharisee was full of himself. He says, with a haughty, irritating, obnoxious look, Wah, I don't even dare to pretend (to look like him), I am so glad, I am not let one of these, and he says, I tithe, I fast, I do all these good things and God surely must be pleased with me. And so, he looks down on others, because he feels he has earned the right to be God's people.

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On the other hand, there is that social scum of life, which is a publican, he's a tax collector, hated by the Jews, seen as a traitor, who would fleece from the own people, to supply the Romans Empire, he is hated, he is rejected by society and this man comes to the temple, having no claim of his own but saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner". He humbles himself and Jesus proclaimed, "This man went away justified", rather than the other, full of himself, brought in obnoxious Pharisee. The

Pharisee had knowledge, he's been to church, he's been to synagogue, he studied all his life, but because of pride, because he's full of himself, he thought salvation is by works, he could not be justified. The other man, he came humbly, and received the grace of God, he was justified.

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Remember the story of the prodigal son. This man, ruined his own life. Being in his father's house, he was discontented, he wanted to go on in his sinful, rebellious ways. And when he came to himself, he repented and he fled back to his father. The father, in amazing mercy, having always looked out off the windows of mercy, longing for the day, the son would turn and once the son turned, the father ran towards the son, hugged him, and said, "Son, welcome home." And the son, with brokenness and contrition, said "Father, I am not worthy." You see, this is the beginning of a realization of the sinfulness and the need for grace. He is now ready to be received. He's broken, he's humbled, he's contrite.

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Suppose, the son turned back and said, "I am back, ah, you better receive me again ah." He's not ready. But the Bible tells us, he's broken, he's ready to receive the grace of the father. But the story doesn't end with the youngest son, it has a twist, and I think, this is really the essence of the parable, or the story. There's a place in the end, where the older brother comes along and say "Wow, this is really unfair. That naughty Ah Seng, he ran away, and this is what our Lau Peh would do for him ? But I have been such a good boy, I deserve more favor from my father and he was furious that the father would show grace."

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You know what? He was full of himself, he was legalistic, he was dependent on his works. He did not understand, he needed grace. We all saved by grace, not race, not works, not heritage and that should humble us. Grace humbles us. To be saved, you have got to be humble and after you have trusted in Jesus, the Gospel of Jesus should continue to humble you. A proud man, simply shows, he is not understood he has been graced (?), he's a sinner, saved by grace.

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In my own devotional reading, I come to Psalms 115. I know, in my website podcasts, I think it's Psalms, 30 something, lah. That's recorded, sometime to go, now I come to Psalms 115, the great verse, that I read just this week,

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

For your mercy, and for your steadfastness, for your faithfulness.

When it is grace, there is no glory given to man. All glory is God. I mean, there is nothing you earned, nothing that you deserved, it's all undeserved. You see, grace give glories to God and grace kills pride and if you are struggling with pride today, is not about you trying to save yourself, it's like telling a drowning man to get out of the water. But if you are struggling with pride today, gaze at Jesus, look full, in his wonderful face and realize, and preach to yourself, afresh and anew, the Gospel of grace. A Gospel centered people, will be a humbled people.

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Then you say, pastor I am not familiar with Psalms 115. Let me tell you a verse, you would definitely be familiar with, Ephesians 2

How does God save us ? Grace. Any works? Not of works. Why? Lest, any man should boast. When we all get to heaven, there is no one who will boast, in our achievements, our accomplishments, it will all be about the grace of God, the achievements and the accomplishments of God the Son.

Eph 2:8,9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

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Saved by grace, not race.

This morning, maybe you are here, and you are sitting on all kinds of false security, oh, my friends, I plea with you, be not the branch that would be broken off. The Jews have all kinds of false security, they eventually were shown up. The only security we

have, is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Sinner, would you turn from your sins and come to Jesus. God is holy, and we are sinful. The fundamental problem of man, is not the lack of peace and joy and so on and so forth, the fundamental problem of man is that we are separated from God and the lack of peace and joy of symptoms of that separation, because of sin and you are incapacitated to cure and save yourself from it. But Jesus is come, Jesus has paid it all, there is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, sinners plunge, been in that flood, you lose all your guilty stains.

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You don't deserve it, it's freely given. Would you flee to the grace of God. Gospeliters, I wish we could all say to ourselves, be humble, be humble, be humble and we would be humble, but it doesn't work that way. It is as you see God in His goodness, in His holiness, that we will be humbled, truly, as a people. Be a Gospel centered people, be regularly refreshing to yourself, the marvelous grace, the wonderful grace of Jesus.

Time stamp in audio 0:36:08.7.

Saved by grace. Boast, not against the branches, be not high-minded. This is the divine perspective by the way. Grace is what God does for us. But the second thing I want to share with you is from maybe the human side. Related? Probably you could see it as two sides of the same coin. But, I like to emphasize it because that's the way Paul emphasized it. Yes, we all saved by grace, but at the very same time, let us realize, the branches stand by faith. So, this is what is on our side, grace is on God's side, faith is on our side. You see, Paul tells us, well, because of unbelief, they were broken off and thou standest by faith. The only reason why you can be part of the tree of life is not because of who you are, but because of who you have believed, Jesus, you stand by faith.

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That Paul, he goes on to say, be not high-minded, but fear, fear, because they may be some who did not believed, have not believed, never believed, fear. He goes on, verse 21, take heed, lest he also spare not thee.

You are shown up, as one who have not truly believed. You see, you have got to keep believing in Jesus. A true child of God keep believing in Jesus. He doesn't believe in Jesus in the past and would never believe in Jesus again. True faith, is enduring faith; that's the biblical teaching. One saved, it's true, you always saved. God

perseveres the man, but God perseveres a man through his enduring faith, he doesn't stop believing. So, the divine aspect is that God preserves the man, the human aspect is, I will keep believing.

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Now, Paul is not saying here, that you will lose your salvation, no such thing. But he does say, that if you stop believing, it only shows up that you have not believed from the beginning. You thought you were, but you were a pretender, you did not believe. So he says, fear, and take heed, lest, he also spare not thee, you are seen to be one who was not truly a believer in this tree.

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This is not unique only to Paul. The writer of the book of Hebrews, repeatedly, describe the need to take heed, for example, Hebrews 4:1-2, it says

Heb 4:1

Let us therefore fear, (Added by Pastor: now, you should be filled with awe and trembling within your souls, with regards to something as important as your eternal salvation. I think there is a danger, when we come to church, week after, week after, week, after week, there is a certain numbness that can come into us and we take for granted that what is preached, is just another day's message, but friends, this is God speaking to us, through His Word and this is with regards to your eternal soul. If someone, if you go into the hospital or to the doctor's room and the doctor has something to tell you about your health, you listen with open ears, because it is about your health.

Maybe, you speak to your financial advisor, you listen with open ears, because it's about your wealth. But friends, this is about your spiritual soul, your eternity. Listen, the writer says, let us therefore, fear. To just come and let's see what I have to listen and it's nothing, I shut off.) fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

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There is a certain danger, when you hear the God you still come short. Hearing is not enough. He says,

Heb 4:2 For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them (Added by Pastor: because, it was), not being mixed with faith (in them that heard it.)

Hearing, is not enough, believing is the key. And you should fear, if the Word of God you have heard was not mixed with faith. Take heed, fear.

Time stamp in audio 0:40:55.8.

Chapter 3, tells us, likewise,

Take heed, same words, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. By the way, again I emphasize, this evil heart of unbelief, was not from a heart of belief, it was never a heart of belief, it has always been that evil heart of unbelief, but it has now shown up, lest there be an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Heb 3:12,13

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

You see, when God, saves a man, He preserves him by His grace and the man keeps believing and when the man stops believing, it is him that shown up that, he was not a believer in the first place. I labor this point, because it's often so confusing for us, to see from the divine and the human. God's grace keeps us, but on our side, we got to keep believing and to keep believing, we ask not one another, daily. That's what you need to do, keep each other in the Word, in the things of God.

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And again, in Hebrews 10: 24-26, now, this is familiar. We all take this as a basis for small groups, for discipleship groups, for Christian community. We see this, we don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, we exhort one another. By the way, exhorting one another is more than preaching and listening to preaching. It's that community, that one another. But sometimes, we missed the impact or the

importance of this passage, because right up to verse 25, it's verse 26 where it says, For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

Heb 10:24-26

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

The importance of this, if you are not assembling, if you not exhorting, there will be an evil heart of unbelief, you may end up being one of those who were never saved in the first place.

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Christian community, is not optional. You can come to church service, week after week, I say, you have missed the point still with regards to your eternal health, your eternal state of welfare. My friends, this is mandated, commanded of God. So, you say, pastor, I've got to take heed, I've got to take heed of what is being said, I have got to keep believing, yes, you are right. But pastor, how do I keep believing, what should I do? Is there something practical please, that I should be mindful of? Let's ask, pastor apostle Paul. This is what he said in verse 22, how do you take heed? In verse 22, he says

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.

This is what you do to keep believing. This is what you do to keep taking heed, you have got to behold the goodness and the severity of God, keep looking to God.

You say, what do I need to look about God? I mean, what is there to see? I'm going to see the goodness and the severity of God. A key word I want to emphasize here, is the word "and", because, I think, in our modern churches, more than Christianity today, we are absolutely comfortable talking about the goodness of God, but we would rather be silent about the severity of God. That's so politically, incorrect, that's such a turn off. Oh, teach about the love of God, teach about their kindness of God, teach

about the mercy of God, preach it brother. Severity, Wah, pastor, please, you're going to drive people away, you're going to turn people off, I don't want to know of a God who is severe. But you see, Paul says, you, behold the goodness and the severity of God, the sharpness of God.

Ah, I say, in our day and age, we have a Santa Claus theology. We only want a God who tells us about His goodness, but we would not want a God of severity. The end is thrown out of the window. You might as well use your liquid paper and blanco it. It's not there, we have a God who looks like a teddy bear, but not the holy God of Israel. We love, the love of God, but we spurn or we run away from the wrath of God.

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But my friends, do you know, that if you say, I cannot accept the God who is sharp and severe, you are saying to yourself, I rather worship an idol. Because, an idol is anything that is other than the true God. Your God today may not be the God of revelation; it's the God of your imagination. I cannot accept a God who will judge, I cannot accept a God who will allow people to go to hell. You know what, you have an idol. It's not the God of the Bible. How does God describe Himself? Moses, once, asked God, what is your name, can you tell me your name, who are you? And God said to Moses, in Exodus 34 and the Lord, passed by, before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

What a wonderful God, a God of love, a God of goodness, a God of mercy, a God of forgiveness. And we say to ourselves, hallelujah this is all I need to know. Ah!, But God did not stop there, God did not say, it is politically incorrect to tell Moses more. No! Moses, you record it, I tell you, that I am not only a God of goodness, but I will be a God who will be by no means, clear the guilty, I will visit the iniquities of the fathers, upon the children and upon the children's children and unto the third and to the fourth generation. I am a God of goodness and severity.

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Jesus Himself, said

Mat 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Time stamp in audio 0:48:03.9.

Rom 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches (Added by Pastor: by the way, please don't misunderstand me, by saying I am, I'm saying God is not good, no, God is absolutely good, there is no one gooder than God's good, right, God's good is gooder than our good; my famous quotation, He is absolutely good, He is always good, it's Him. I am in no way, downplaying the goodness and the mercy of God, please, but it is clear, isn't it, the Bible tells me so, that He is good, He forbears, He is long-suffering and the goodness of God is intended to lead us to repentance.

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But, don't stop at verse 4, look at verse 5

Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

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My son, loves to read picture Bible and there will be times, he loves, he will show me, ay, daddy, come and see, come and see, he will talk about this and he will talk about that and one of his favorite stories, is look at Jesus, ride on a donkey, look at the grey donkey. Daddy, why is He on a donkey? I asked, Shawn a question in return, Shawn, do you know that Jesus will also ride on a white horse, no, not there. Why, why white horse? And that opens up an opportunity for me to help him, behold the goodness and the severity of the Lord.

The first coming of Jesus Christ it's filled with goodness and grace. But my friends, it's not forever that this grace is open up unto us. There will come a day of vengeance and wrath. When He arrives not on a grey donkey but in a white horse, that will be the day of vengeance, that will be the day that Jesus was tread upon the winepress, that will be a day of wrath. Don't tear those pages of the Bible, God reveals Himself as such, God of immense, immeasurable goodness, God of extreme holiness and righteousness and then would be a day of wrath.

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Hell, is a horrible place. We certainly, don't wish it for anybody. But hell, is an echo of the glory of God, do you realize that? It's an echo of the glory that is spurned by men. Hell strikes fear in us, because it shows that the severity of God and if we come to a state where we say

God will not send us to hell, because of our sins, something go awry. Heaven is glorious, hell is scary. Behold, the goodness and severity of God, and what is the purpose, so that we can continue in His goodness. The severity is where we have to flee from and the goodness is where we have to flee to and as you keep looking at God's goodness and God's severity, it forces you, it causes you to flee to His goodness, that you will not have pride in yourself, but you will say, Jesus is the only way, continuing, believing in Jesus Christ.

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So, this is how, my friends, you stand by faith. Keeping your faith, keeping on in believing, because you behold and you are still looking at the goodness and the severity of God. Keep looking to the Bible. It's so scary, when people slide away from God, they miss church, they don't open the Bible in their daily lives and you know what happens to your heart, that is the hardening of sin. Why?, Because you stop beholding God in His Scriptures, you stop seeing His goodness, you stop seeing His severity and that's why, the evil heart of unbelief is real. The hardening, by the deceitfulness of sin is real. I say to yourself, if you want to stand by faith, look at Hebrews, exhort one another.

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My friends, I regularly want to emphasize this to you, I appreciate that all of us, at least come to church services; that's not Christianity, that's not enough, that's not going to help your soul, by itself. You've got to exhort one another, you have got to be in meaningful groups where the Scriptures is shared and way God is seen and when people are drawned. Our small groups are not meant to be places where we vent our frustrations and sorrows only. There's a place for that, but supremely, is to see God through His holy writ. Exhort one another, if you're not in small groups today, do yourself a favor. Do yourself a favor for your soul, keep believing, by keep beholding, by keep reading, by keep exhorting one another. There is no shortcut.

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My time, I believe, is almost up and I've got to behold the time as well. I wish I had time to share with you the last point, but I will keep it to next week and so, this day, remind yourself of the olive tree. We are all here by the grace of God. And we remain there, by faith in God. Behold, what marvelous truth God is giving to you today and may God help you today, to apply diligently for the sake of your eternal life. Let's bow, for a word of prayer shall we. Father, we thank you today, for the lessons that you have for us, because in and of ourselves, we would never fathom these things. Thank you, that in the ways of the world, You are sovereign and good and working beautifully, Your glorious purposes amongst the Jews, amongst the Gentiles amongst the world. And Lord today, I pray for they are gathered in this room, my soul, fears, trembles at the thought of many, who may say to you, Lord, Lord, didn't we know You and You would say to them, I never knew you. Father, would You have mercy and humble each and every heart and by your spirit, grand enlightenment, illumination, that they see Christ and His glory and His grace and the forgiveness and the reconciliation, and the life and the blessings that is found in Him alone. By grace, would You today, graft us into the tree of life. I pray today, for those who have presumed, assumed. Oh, God, I pray they will keep on, beholding Your glory in the Scriptures, that they may keep on believing. Secondly, I pray, not that for those who are saved to have a lack of assurance this morning, but I pray for those are not yet saved that truly, this message, will awaken their souls and they were examining themselves if they be in the faith. And we pray for each and everyone, once again, that we well, truly be of true Israel, truly, be Your people. Lord, do that which only you can do. Have mercy, show grace, forgive us and we give You all the glory, not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, for Thy mercy and faithfulness sake. We praise You, we thank You, we pray all this now in Jesus Name amen. God bless.