

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Irrevocable Call of God

Romans 11:17-36

2000

Introduction

John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

Jesus said in Matt 7:16-20 that a tree could be judged by its fruit. And in Matt 21:43 he told the Jews that since they remained spiritually unfruitful that, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

I God's Plan For The Gentiles' Illustrated

A. The fact of the Gentiles' dependence

1. Some of the natural branches have been **broken off** [Verse 17a]

Notice that Paul says "some", not all, of the braches have been broken off. Even in the worst of spiritual times, Israel had a faithful remnant.

Jer 11:16-17 "The LORD called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form. But with the roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken. The LORD Almighty, who planted you, has decreed disaster for you, because the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done evil and provoked me to anger by burning incense to Baal."

2. A wild olive shoot has been **grafted in** [Verse 17b]

Olive trees were an important part of the economy of Israel and have been known to live for hundreds of years. But as they age, the branches become less and less productive. In order to restore the fruitfulness of the tree, new branches are grafted on to an old tree.

Now the normal practice is to upgrade an old tree or a wild olive tree by grafting healthy fruit-producing branches to it. But here Paul talks about grafting wild, fruitless branches onto a good tree; something he describes as contrary to nature.

- a. It shares the **root** with the natural branches
- b. It shares the nourishing **sap** of the root

Eph 3:6 “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

B. The response of the Gentiles’ dependence

1. **Humility**: Do not boast over the Jews [Verse 18-19]

- a. We do not support the root
- b. The root supports us

Rom 3:27 “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.”

2. **Gratitude**: Do not be arrogant [Verse 20]

God’s gift of salvation should never be used as a platform from which to look down on unbelievers – especially Jewish unbelievers. We who are Gentiles are fortunate to have any part in the tree at all. God’s mercy and grace should produce in us, not pride, but a profound humility!

1 Peter 5:5-6 “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- a. The branches were broken off because of unbelief

Unbelief = *Apaistia* = “Faithlessness, disbelief, or disobedience”

Heb 3:12 “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

- b. We were grafted on because of faith

As we have discovered in our study of Romans, salvation is by faith alone. The power of salvation is God’s grace, but the condition of salvation is man’s faith. The unbelieving Jews were broken off because of a lack of faith and the Gentiles are grafted on because of faith.

Rom 4:16-17 “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham.”

3. **Fear**: Realize that we too could be broken off [Verse 21]

Fear = *Phobos* = “To be frightened or alarmed”

If Israel’s special calling and position as God’s chosen people could not prevent them from being broken off, how much more should the Gentiles, who had no special relationship as God’s chosen people, be humble and thankful, realizing that they too could be broken off for unbelief.

Phil 2:12-13 “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation

with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

C. The basis of the Gentiles' dependence

1. God's character in action

a. His **sternness** to those who fell [Verse 22a]

Sternness = Apotomia = “Severity” Its root meaning is “To cut off”

1 Cor 10:1-5, 11-13 “For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.” ...“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”

Quote:

J.I. Packer believes that we live in an "age that has unashamedly sold itself to the gods of greed, pride, sex, and self-will, (while) the church mumbles on about God's kindness, but says virtually nothing about His judgment."

A.W. Pink wrote that "the wrath of God is a perfection of the Divine character on which we need to meditate frequently. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. Second, to beget a true fear in our souls for God. And third, to draw out our soul in fervent praise to Jesus Christ for having delivered us from 'the wrath to come' (1 Thessalonians 1:10)"

b. His **kindness** to those who continue in His kindness [Verse 22b]

Kindness = Chrestotes = “Gentleness or goodness

Continue = Epimeno= “To abide in or persevere in”

Rom 2:4 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?”

Throughout the New Testament continuing on with the Lord is the final test of salvation. In fact, to continue on in the faith is the clearest evidence of genuine conversion (Jn 8:31; 15:5-6; Col 1:22-23; Heb 3:12-14; 4:11; 1 Jn 2:19).

Heb 3:13-15 “We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.”

Matt 24:11-14 “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

1. Otherwise you also will be **cut off**

Cut off = Ekkopto = “To cut down”

John 15:2 “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

2. God’s restoration in action

a. Those who don’t persist in **unbelief** will be grafted in [Verse 23-24]

1. Gentiles who were wild by nature

2. Jews who were the natural branches

If God can graft in wild branches like you and me to Jesus Christ, how much more will He be able to graft a natural branch into the root, Jesus Christ!

II God’s Remedy to Gentile Conceit Revealed

Paul uses the word mystery often to indicate that he is about to disclose a new revelation, which he has received (1 Cor 15:51; Col 1:26-27).

A. God has allowed Israel to experience a partial **hardening** [Verse 25a]

Partial hardening = Porosis = “Callousness or blindness”

Notice, it says “Partial hardening.” Not every Jew has rejected the Messiah.

2 Cor 3:14-17 “But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

1. Until the **full number** of the Gentiles has come in [Verse 25b]

Full number = Pleroma = “Fullness or complete number”

What is the full number of the Gentiles referring to? It is when the last Gentile unbeliever becomes a child of God. Somewhere in the world, there is a man or woman who is the very last Gentile to be converted to Christ. When that person acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the full number of the Gentiles will have come in. Who is that person? We don’t know. But it might be your neighbor, or a co-worker, or a spouse. You might be the person who God will gift with the privilege of leading the very last Gentile to Christ and usher in the final prophetic events recorded for us in the book of Revelation.

Rom 11:11-12 “Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!”

2. In future, “**All** Israel will be saved” [Verse 26a]

All Israel doesn’t mean “every Jew without exception” but “Israel as a whole.”

When will this widespread salvation take place? During the millennial reign of Christ.

Hos 3:4-5 “For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.”

B. God will send a deliverer from Zion [Verse 26b]

Isaiah 59:20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.”

1. He will turn Jacob from **godlessness** [Verse 26c]

Acts 3:26 “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

2. He will take away their **sins** [Verse 27]

Hebrews 10:16-17 “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

a. Because of the Gospel, they are “enemies” [Verse 28a]

Enemies = Echthros = “A hostile foe”

Because of unbelief they are at enmity with God (Rom 5:10; 8:7).

Colossians 1:21 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”

b. But because of election, they are loved [Verse 28b]

Israel was a temporary enemy of God because her rejection of the gospel, but permanently loved on account of the patriarchs. The promises that God made to the patriarchs are guaranteed to their descendents, not on the basis of merit, but on the basis of the fidelity of God’s Word.

Deut 4:31 “For the LORD ... will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.”

1. For God’s **gifts** are irrevocable [Verse 29a]

Gifts = Charisma = “A divine deliverance or spiritual endowment”

2. For God’s **calling** is irrevocable [Verse 29b]

God has not changed His mind about Israel! Nor does He change His mind about us. Even if we are faithless, He will remain faithful!

Numbers 23:19 “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Ps 89:34 “I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.”

C. God will show mercy to both Jew and Gentile

1. Gentiles were at one time disobedient to God [Verse 30]

a. But we have now received mercy

Mercy = Eleeo = “Compassion or pity for someone in need”

Because man’s greatest need is forgiveness and reconciliation, God generously provides both in and through his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:10 “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

2. The Jews have become disobedient to God [Verse 30b]

a. In order that they may receive mercy

For Jew and Gentile alike, salvation is based on God’s mercy, never on man’s merit.

1 Tim 1:13-14 “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

3. God has **bound** all men over to disobedience [Verse 32]

Disobedience = Apeitheia = Indicates someone who is unpersuadable – a person who refuses to believe, acknowledge or obey.

Here we have God’s heart for the human race revealed: He wants to have mercy on all men. But for this to happen, He must first bind them over to disobedience in order for them to recognize their desperate condition apart from Him.

Gal 3:22 “But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.”

a. In order to have **mercy** on them all

All = Not “all” without exception, but “all” who would receive the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Rom 3:22-24 “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

1 Tim 2:2-5 “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

III God’s Plan Of Salvation Extolled

In verses 33-36 Paul brings chapters 1-11 to a climactic conclusion!

A. God is distinguished in His **intellect** [Verse 33a]

1. He is rich in wisdom
2. He is rich in knowledge

Col 2:1-4 “My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

B. God is distinguished in his justice [Verse 33b]

1. His judgments are unsearchable
2. His paths beyond tracing out

Prov 25:2 “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.”

Isa 40:28 “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

C. God is distinguished in His **knowledge** [Verse 34]

1. Who has known His mind?
2. Who has been His counselor?

Application:

One of the most humorous things that God experiences must be the incessant advice we offer Him. We tell him what to do and when to do it – humbly in prayer, of course. We regularly try to persuade God to act on our brainstorm. It would be like having a two year old run your life.

Isa 40:13-14 “Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?”

D. God is distinguished in His generosity [Verse 35]

1. Who has ever given to God?
2. Who is God indebted to?

It’s often been said that you can’t out give God.

Job 41:11 “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.”

E. God is distinguished in His **sovereignty** [Verse 36]

1. He is the origin of all things

Colossians 1:15-16 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”

2. He is the sustainer of all things

Colossians 1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

3. He is the goal of all things

Colossians 1:18-19 “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

“He is the author of life, the sustainer of life and the chief end of life.”

Revelation 4:10-11 “... the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”