

Romans Part 31 (11:16-24) - Chastening and the Security of Our Salvation

Tuesday Night Bible Study, February 12, 2008

--11:16: "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

--in ch. 11 Paul repeatedly makes the point that God's plan for Israel is not over just because they rejected Christ, and in verse 16 he uses a double analogy to make this point...

--"for if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy."

--under the Mosaic law God required Israel to present to Him a small portion of their harvest as a sacrifice. By sacrificing this "firstfruit" to God (thus making it "holy") the entire harvest was dedicated to God (and also made "holy"). Not until they presented this "firstfruit" to God could they partake of the remainder of the harvest with God's blessing.

--not only did they have to offer the firstfruit of the grains but also the first portion of dough made from the grains (hence Paul's reference to "the lump" of dough)

--the firstfruit offerings were used to feed the Levites who represented God.

--Paul's analogy is that just as the whole "lump" of dough was dedicated to God by the firstfruit of dough being dedicated, so all Israel was dedicated to God by the first patriarchs being dedicated to God... By establishing a permanent relationship with Abraham and Isaac God established a permanent relationship with all their descendants.

--"and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

--this analogy makes the same point as the previous... if a root is holy then the branches that stem from the root are also holy – no matter what kind of season the branches may go through!

--no matter how far Israel rebels, God's covenant with them through their forefathers will not change, just as it didn't change when they rebelled through worshipping a golden calf... when Moses, in prayer, spelled out the only reason why God would not destroy them – **"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self**, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" (Exodus 32:13)

--today Israel is worshiping the golden calf of worldly gain while God waits for them to return to Him...

--11:19-24: "You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

--this passage speaks of both Israel and Christians being "cut off"... at first glance it sounds like the warning about being "cut off" means that you could lose your salvation, but at closer look it becomes clear that this is not what the passage is saying... nowhere in this passage does it state that being "cut off" means losing salvation.

--to properly understand what being "cut off" means for Christians you need to understand the context of what being "cut off" means for Israel...

--the passage states that "they [*the Jews*] were broken off" because of their "unbelief" in Christ, which means that those who were broken off had never experienced salvation in Christ to begin with – **so being broken off before salvation could not mean losing salvation!**

--for over 2000 years Israel was the steward of God's revelation to mankind... God had entrusted them with the sacred task of upholding the sacrificial system and all the Mosaic law that prepared the way for Christ to make the final payment for all mankind's sin.

--when Israel as a nation rejected Christ, their strategic role in God's plan on the earth was temporarily removed – they were "cut off" from being an effective instrument in God's hands and ceased to bear spiritual fruit.

--the church was grafted in where Israel was broken off, and now the church is the steward of God's message to the world... while Israel is spiritually idle in it's broken off state the church is fulfilling the Great Commission, spreading the gospel around the world and making disciples of all nations.

--just like Israel was "cut off" from the role they once held in being stewards of God's message to the world, so too individual Christians and churches corporately can be "cut off" from their role in being stewards of God's message to the world...

--the point Paul is making is simply a stern warning about not backsliding into habitual sin and being cut off from effective ministry.

--in Revelation 2-3 Jesus warned entire churches about being cut off from their ministry. For example, in Revelation 2:4-5 He warned the church at Ephesus: "I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent."

--the "lampstand" is an allusion to the candlestick in the temple which if removed would suspend the entire Levitical service; so the meaning here is that this church would cease to function as a church if they didn't repent.

--the stern warnings to the churches in Revelation raise a high standard that should cause us to fall to our knees in humility before God and pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 139:23-24)

--in the words of 2 Timothy 2:20-22 when we fall into habitual sin we are no longer "sanctified and useful for the Master..."

--2 Timothy 2:20-22: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

--we need a constant reminder of the severity of sin and the devastation it can wreak in our lives... in ministry, friendships, marriages, work...

--God has given us the incredible responsibility of partnering with Him in the advancement of His Kingdom. He wants so much for us to be "vessels of honor" in His hands, but don't think that He won't take away the blessings He's given us if we habitually persist in sin!

--as Paul said, "consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off [*from the role that He wants you to fulfill in His Kingdom*]." (11:21-22)

--there are many sobering examples of this in the church today... pastors who fall into sin and in a moment lose a ministry they built over a lifetime.

--this is a reminder that we need regularly – "consider the goodness and severity of God..."

--not only does sin rob us of ministry opportunity but it also robs us of intimacy with God, and intimacy with God is the deepest joy in life!

--temptations are nothing more than lies from Satan designed to "steal, kill, and destroy!"
(John 10:10)

--"And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." (v.23)

--not only can Israel be restored but Christians who have fallen can be restored also... restored to ministry and intimacy with God.

--we read in prophecy that one day Israel as a nation will turn to Christ in faith and their role in ministry will be restored....

--the state of being broken off and under God's judgment, far from meaning they've lost their salvation, will actually be instrumental in causing Israel to turn to Christ for salvation.

--Zechariah 13-14 describes the end of the Great Tribulation where Israel will be in the deepest pit they've ever been in with the entire world declaring war against them – it is in this darkest hour that they realize their need for Christ and for the first time as a nation turn to Him in faith.

--in the words of Romans 11:26-27 – "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:
'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.'"

--and then shortly thereafter we read in prophecy that Christ will set up the Millennial Kingdom where Israel as a nation will play a central role.

--11:17-18: "And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."

--"the root and fatness of the olive tree..." refers to the blessing of salvation that stems from God's covenant with Abraham.

--many Jews had come to look down on Gentiles as somehow being inferior because they were not part of God's Old Testament covenant, and in a like manner many Gentile Christians throughout history look down on Jews because they rejected Christ.

>>>Paul is simply warning against having an arrogant, prideful attitude about salvation.

--both Israel and Gentiles are totally dependent on God's unconditional covenant, not on their own merit – neither have anything to boast about!

--Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

--A FEW SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT WHY WE CAN'T LOSE OUR SALVATION

--in the words of Romans 11:29 – "**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**"

--salvation is called a "gift" several times in Romans (5:15, 5:16, 5:17, 5:18, 6:23)

--when we were saved, God "purchased [us] with His own blood." (Acts 20:28)

--nowhere in Scripture does it speak of God losing that which He has purchased by His own blood!

--salvation is based on the righteousness of Christ being "credited" (Romans 4:1-8) to our account.

--nowhere does Scripture speak of His righteousness being debited from our account after it is credited to our account!

--when we are saved, we are "born of the Spirit" and "sealed" by the Spirit..

--Ephesians 1:13-14: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

--the word "guarantee" is used only 3 times in the Bible and every time it refers to the Holy Spirit being the guarantee of our salvation! (2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:14)

--nowhere does Scripture speak of those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit as being unsealed!

--we can't lose the Spirit but we can grieve the Spirit...

--Ephesians 4:30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

--2 Timothy 2:12b-13: "If we deny Him, He also will deny us. 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

--God has the same patience with us as He has with Israel because of His unconditional covenant with them!

--the same patience that waits for the day that Israel will turn to Him – "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; 27 **For this is My covenant** with them...'" (Romans 11:26-27)