

Exegetical Notes - Romans 11:17-21  
**“The Purpose of Israel’s Refusal to Believe:  
A Warning to the Gentiles”**

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**Romans 11:17-21**

*(In Romans 11, Paul is answering the question, “Did God reject Israel?” In Romans 11:1 he answers that question with an emphatic “NO.” God has not rejected Israel. He then explains that God will call a faithful remnant from among Israel that will profess with their lips that Jesus is the Messiah and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead. Today’s text moves to the second point in Paul’s answer to the question.)*

**Verses 17-18**

***If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,<sup>18</sup> do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.***

- Paul is speaking to non-Jews in this passage. It is a warning to them not to think they are above the Jews in God’s sight.
- Paul explains that some branches, some Jews, were broken off from the bush and that other branches, non-Jews, were grafted into the bush. The bush is the family of God, those who are saved through Jesus Christ. But the wild olive branches, those grafted into the bush, should not consider themselves better than the other branches because they are nourished from sap from the root of the bush.
- The root of the bush is God and all of the branches are nourished through His will.
- It is important to remember that God nourishes all parts of His family. We do not nourish or supply God with anything.

## Verses 19-21

***You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”<sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble.<sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***

- The grafted in branches might argue that the other branches broken off were broken off so that they could be grafted in. Paul agrees that this is true. However, he warns that the agreement is dangerous because the grafted in branches were not chosen on the basis of merit, but simply because they confessed that Jesus was Lord and that God had raised him from the dead. They had been grafted in, not because they were worthy but because of their belief.
- Therefore, those grafted in should be grateful to God for their salvation and not arrogant about.
- Paul warns that arrogance about one’s relationship to God, given the broken off branches of Israel, could lead to their fate.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Purpose of Israel’s Refusal to Believe: A Warning to the Gentiles*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)