



Continue In God's Kindness

Romans 11:11-24

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 11:22—KJV).

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22—NASB).

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22—NRSV).

Paul grieved over the fact that most his people had rejected Jesus as their Messiah and the forgiveness of sins that Jesus offered them through faith in Him. However, Paul rejoiced that this had opened the door wider for the Gentiles to hear the good news about Jesus and come to faith in Him. To explain himself, Paul used the illustration of an olive tree. The root of the olive tree was holy, but the unbelieving branches (some unbelieving Jews) were broken off; then, God grafted in the believing branches (some believing Gentiles) from a wild olive tree, which made the olive tree more fruitful. Then, Paul warned the Gentiles not to become arrogant and despise the unbelieving Jews; rather, from what happened to them, the believing branches should fear and stand fast through faith: “For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you” (Romans 11:21). Unhappily, sometimes believers focus so much on the kindness (or mercy) of God that they lose sight of the justice of God. Believers can enjoy the mercy of God “provided they continue in his kindness” by taking sin seriously and not taking God’s forgiveness for granted. Persistence in practicing sin can lead to forgetting God and the life Jesus expects from His followers. To serve as a warning to others and uphold His law, God sometimes needs to cut off a supposed follower of Jesus Christ who is living hostile to God. Still, there is the possibility of being grafted in again through repentance and faith.

Thinking Further

1. When Paul “failed” in his outreach to the Jews, what did he do and how did he feel about it?
2. What did Paul mean by “the world” and the reconciliation of “the world.”
3. When he used an olive tree as an illustration, how did Paul describe the Jews who rejected Jesus and what could happen to them?
4. How did Paul use an olive tree to describe Gentiles who believed in Jesus?
5. What warning did Paul give the Gentile Christians?