

Session 69: Identifying the Faith

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 69)

If the faith is not saving faith, then what kind of faith is it?

In order to explain this, we need to step aside for a moment and look at another way the word “faith” is used. After we do this, we will come back and look at the entire phrase in verse 20 in the context of the passage it is found.

As I said, we normally think of faith as something we have in God, but there are a number of times in which Paul uses faith in a different way. Let us look at some of them. The first time we encounter this different way of using “faith” is found in Romans 3.

Romans 3:1 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. ³ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? ⁴ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

The “faith of God” is not referring to God having faith in someone. Neither is it referring to someone having faith in God. The preposition is “of” not “in.” The “faith of God” is pointing to God’s faithfulness to his word; his faithfulness to do what he said he would do.

This is why the very next verse says, “...let God be true, but every man a liar...”

The “faith of God” is God’s faithfulness to do what he said he will do.

Another example is found further down in chapter 3.

Romans 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

Many people think this is another way of saying ‘faith in Jesus Christ.’ Others think it is a mistake in the King James Version. It is not. By the way, the wording in the Greek here and in all of the other places we will look at really does say “the faith of Jesus Christ.”

In verse 22, Paul says the righteousness of God is by “the faith of Jesus Christ.” Again, this is not describing Jesus’ faith in someone else. It is describing his faithful performance as our Redeemer.

What did Jesus perform in order that we might have the righteousness of God?

In verse 22, just as back in verse 3, the “faith” is referring to “fidelity.” Here, the word faith is being used in its quality sense; it denotes the quality of his faithfulness in his redemptive act.

Even before we got to Romans 11, we had already been made aware of this different way of using the word faith. These are not the only places we will see “faith” used this way.

***Galatians 2:15** We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

The law does not justify a man, but the “faithful performance of Jesus Christ” is what we trust to justify us. What did Jesus perform so that we could be justified? He satisfied God’s justice against us by being our substitute-redeemer. He paid our sin debt.

When we trust Jesus as our all-sufficient Savior, we are trusting that everything that needed to be accomplished to forgive us, to solve our righteousness problem, to change us from being enemies of God to being “at one” with God (to be justified unto eternal life) was faithfully accomplished by Jesus Christ. The “faith of Christ” is his fidelity to do what needed to be done in order to make us righteous, to make us justified before God.

***Galatians 3:22** But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

The promise of eternal life might be given to them that believe because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to accomplish and provide for such in his death, burial, and resurrection.

***Philippians 3:9** And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

Paul said instead of having his own righteousness which was performed by keeping the law, he has the righteousness which is of God. And how was that righteousness made available? The faithfulness of Jesus Christ to accomplish all that was needed made the righteousness of God available.

This (little talked about) use of the word “faith” is describing the Jesus’ faithfulness as our substitute-redeemer to provide all that was necessary for us to be saved – to be justified unto eternal life.

He performed that which we could never do for ourselves. That is the “faith” of Christ.

When we look at redemption in the book of Ruth (where Boaz functions as a ‘kinsman-redeemer’), we see two requirements set forth which apply to the one doing the redemption:

1. The redeemer had to be capable of functioning as such.

Every man is disqualified by this first requirement from providing redemption for anyone else. We are not capable of such.

2. The redeemer had to faithfully perform all that the redemption required. The redeemer had to be “faithful” in the performance of the redemption.

The one needing redemption was entirely dependent upon the one doing the redeeming.

***Ephesians 3:11** According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: ¹² In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

We have boldness and access with confidence because of the faithful performance of Jesus Christ and not by any work which we have done. Here, Paul is not talking about our salvation being because of the faithful performance of Jesus. He is talking about us being made fit to be utilized by God in his eternal purpose for us: the reconciliation of the governmental positions in the heavenly places!

Now we see that the ‘faith of Christ’ provided for more than just the forgiveness of sins, it provided for our spiritual fitness to be utilized by God in his plan and purpose.

***Galatians 2:19** For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. ²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

In my early years as a young preacher, I memorized verse 20 but I did not recognize what was being said. I misunderstood the “faith of the Son of God,” part of the verse.

This passage has to do with living unto God in our everyday lives. Our ability to “live unto God” (verse 19) and the ability for Christ to live in me (verse 20) is made possible by ‘the [faithful performance] of the Son of God, who loved me...’

Apart from the ‘faith of Jesus Christ’ we would have nothing: no forgiveness, no righteousness, no atonement, no justification, no sanctification, no ability to live unto God, no way to be free from sin – nothing.

With that being said, let us now look at Romans 11.

Romans 11:20 *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.*

The only reason we have a changed standing from being in the wild olive tree to being in the good olive tree is by faith. Who's faith is it the Gentiles or Christ's?

Not all of the Gentiles who were grafted in have saving faith, or faith of any kind, for that matter. They had no part in being grafted. In fact, unless God told them about it, they would not even know. What kind of faith could they have? None

God was faithful to have his Son perform something in his death, burial, and resurrection which made it possible for us to have a standing in the tree.

Now go back to the context and see if this reading of the "faith" does not fit perfectly.

Romans 11:18 *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.*

The passage began with a warning not to boast against the branches that were broken off. It ends with an exhortation not to be "highminded, but fear." In other words, do not get to thinking that you Gentiles are so special that God just broke off branches to put you in. Yes, Israel was broken off because of unbelief and "thou standest" (the only reason you Gentiles are in this tree) "by faith." It is not because you are so special or because you did something, but because God has provided for you to be the recipients of his goodness and grace because of what his Son provided.

The branches were broken off because of unbelief. You Gentiles are now in this tree because of the faithful performance of Jesus Christ in providing for salvation to the Gentiles.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 70: Identifying the Faith, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 70)

Last time we talked about what “standing by faith means” and I told you what I think. That is the way I see it. If you see it differently, then fine, you have to be persuaded in your own mind about this.

I would like for us to go back through the passage and look at the warnings again; this time, for the purpose of establishing that these things are written to the Gentiles in general, not to saved Gentiles only.

First, Paul makes mention of his audience.

Romans 11:13 *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:*

And by the way, he is the apostle to every Gentile. He is preaching a gospel for every Gentile.

Romans 11:20 *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.*

Let us look at this from the standpoint of thinking Paul is only writing to the saved Gentiles in the church at Rome.

- Verse 20 – He tells them to “fear.”
- Verse 21 – He tells them to “take heed.”

Why is Paul telling them to fear? The further explanation comes in verse 21: “take heed...” and why? “Take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

The “also” tells us someone else was not spared: who? Unbelieving Israel was “broken off” where they not? If Paul is writing to saved Gentiles and telling them to “take heed lest he also spare not thee,” what does that sound like? It sounds like saved Gentiles may lose their salvation. We know from Romans 4-5 that is not possible.

Someone might say the reason to “take heed” is because God may end the program and not because they lose their salvation. I agree with that except for one thing: the only people who do not need to fear the ending of the dispensation of Gentile grace are saved Gentiles.

What happens to saved Gentiles living at the time God ends this dispensation of Gentile grace? The first thing is that we get a glorified body. Do we fear that? Are we dreading getting a body that will no longer endure the sufferings of this present time? Do we fear no longer being sick,

no longer growing old, no longer being under the bondage of corruption, no more diseases and no more pain?

What else happens to saved Gentiles living at the time of the end of this dispensation of Gentile grace? We go to be with the Lord, do we not? Do we dread seeing the Lord? Are we fearful of our heavenly Father?

At the end of the dispensation of Gentile grace, we get our assignments and we will move into the heavenly places as the body of Christ. Should we fear that?

Are we dreading to deliver the creature from the bondage of corruption? Are we scared to take up our position in the heavenly places? Are we fearful of the end of the dispensation of Gentile grace? I hope not.

Paul says we ought to “love his appearing” not fear it.

2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

I realize Paul is not writing this in connection with the end of the dispensation of Gentile grace. He is writing it in connection with the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

As far as this life goes, those two things result in pretty much the same thing, do they not? What we are doing down here on the earth is finished.

If we believe that Paul is only writing to saved Gentiles, he is telling them to fear, he is threatening them with being “cut off” just like Israel was. If you think being “cut off” only means the end of the program, then what is it he thinks we should be fearing, and taking heed of?

If Paul is writing to Gentiles in general, most of who are not saved, then they have plenty to fear about the end of the dispensation of Gentile grace. What would an unsaved Gentile have to fear if God *cut them out of the good olive tree* and began to plug Israelites back in again? It would signal the end of the Gentiles’ opportunity to believe the gospel of the grace of God. It would be the end of God working directly with Gentiles. Many things would go back to how they were in the “time past” of Israel’s program. Israel and Gentiles would no longer be on the same level.

Gentiles would be on the outside again. Their wonderful opportunity to be saved under grace would be gone; that is something to fear.

It is sometimes taught that these are not threats, but they sure sound like it to me. Words like “fear,” and “take heed,” and “shalt be cut off” sound like things to be avoided.

Let us break the passage down. As we do, it is important to remember that Paul has been talking about Gentiles in general. He has not been restricting his comments to saved Gentiles only.

Romans 11:20 *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

What should the Gentiles fear? In the context of verse 20, they should fear the same thing which happened to those before them; they should fear being broken off. What happens to a branch that is broken off? It no longer enjoys the goodness and mercy of God.

Romans 11:21 *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

What does “take heed” mean?

Oxford English Dictionary

Heed: to have care, to concern oneself about, to give attention to, to mind.

They had better “take heed” because when God is finished with this dispensation of Gentile grace, all of the unbelieving Gentiles will be “cut off” (just like unbelieving Israel was), they will be put back into that wild olive tree and God will resume what he was doing with Israel.

What does “lest” mean?

Oxford English Dictionary

Lest: Used as a negative particle of intention or purpose, introducing a clause expressive of something to be prevented or guarded against. 2) used after verbs of fearing, or phrases indicating apprehension or danger, to introduce a clause expressing the event that is feared.

And according to the scripture, what is it that “lest” is introducing?

Romans 11:21 *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

Again, this is talking to Gentiles in general; not threatening saved Gentiles with the loss of their salvation.

What does it mean not be “spared?” God did not spare the natural branches from being cut off, so the answer is that you Gentiles should want to be spared from being broken off, like unbelieving Israel was. The problem for an unbelieving Gentile being cut off is that there is no

promise that God will ever return Gentiles to the position they presently hold in this dispensation of Gentile grace. You can say that this is a ‘once in forever’ opportunity.

***Romans 11:22** 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.*

What is severity?

Oxford English Dictionary

Severity: 1) strictness in dealing with others; stern in treatment, discipline, punishment or the like. Harshness of judgment, criticism, or rebuke.

That is certainly something to fear when it comes from how God is treating you.

***Romans 11:22** 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.*

That brings us to verse 22, and now it is time to correct something that I taught you 2½ years ago when we first went through this. Because I failed to keep in mind the audience Paul had in mind when he wrote this (that audience being all the Gentiles in general), I did not see verse 22 correctly.

The way I read this last time was as though the “if thou continue in his goodness” was a conditional statement. I know it can be read that way, but that reading cannot be the case. Let me show you why.

By that way of understanding the verse, we are reading it to say that the only way to keep God from ending the dispensation of Gentile grace is to “continue in his goodness.” We then have to define “continue in his goodness” to mean ‘respond positively to his goodness’ or ‘live according to what God is now offering us’ or something like that.

There are a couple of problems with that. Not the least of which is that if this is a program of grace (and it is), then we did not do anything to get it in the first place (and we did not), and we also cannot do anything to keep it. If God is asking Gentiles to do anything in order to keep the dispensation of Gentile grace around, then that is no longer grace, it is performance. If it is grace, then it cannot be based on performance.

If God gave us Gentiles a dispensing of grace apart from any works on our part, then there can be no works of any kind to keep it; otherwise, it is no more grace. It would be works.

Therefore, whatever we think the phrase means, if we interpret “if thou continue in his goodness” as something we must do, then this thing that God is doing is not grace. And we know that it is. The conclusion we must come to: “if thou continue in his goodness” is not talking about anything we have to do.

If that is not it, to what does that phrase refer? It is referring to the fact that this dispensation of Gentile grace is not permanent. We will only get God’s goodness for as long as he allows us to continue in it. When that ends, every unbelieving Gentile will be cut off.

Before, I slid away from this understanding because I only saw it as stating the obvious. Now I understand that it is not meant to state the obvious, but to emphasize the temporary nature of this dispensation of Gentile grace.

Paul is saying it like this:

Romans 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell (unbelieving Israel), severity; but toward thee (all of you Gentiles), goodness, if thou (for as long as God allows you to) continue in his goodness: otherwise (because when God stops his goodness to the Gentiles) thou (Gentiles) also (like unbelieving Israel) shalt be cut off.

The point being there will come a time when those unbelieving Gentiles (branches) will also be broken off, there will be an end to the dispensation of Gentile grace and a return to the Israel program.

That is the way I see it. If you see it differently, then fine, you have to be persuaded in your own mind about it.

Space for personal reflection and notes

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Session 71: Recap of the Olive Tree Illustration

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 8, Session 71)

In our previous session we were looking at Romans 11:22. I inserted some things in this so we will all be looking at it the same way.

Romans 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell (unbelieving Israel), severity; but toward thee (all of you Gentiles), goodness, if thou (for as long as God allows you to) continue in his goodness: otherwise (because when God stops his goodness to the Gentiles) thou (Gentiles) also (like unbelieving Israel) shalt be cut off.

The “cut off” is from God’s goodness and mercy. When God cuts off the unbelieving Gentiles, what comes next? Answer: the resumption of his program with Israel. That is exactly what Paul has in mind. Read the next verse.

Romans 11:23 And they also...

Wait, who is the “they?” The “they” is Israel.

Romans 11:23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in...

This “if” does introduce a conditional phrase. Once God stops his goodness and mercy to Gentiles, any Israelite who does not abide in unbelief (which means, all Israelites who believe in Jesus Christ) shall be grafted in.

It appears from this verse that the entire nation does not get grafted back into the tree, but only those who believe.

Romans 11:23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

That last phrase is the point of all this; God will and is able to put Israel back into the good olive tree.

We did this three sessions ago but the audio was not there so I am redoing it and this one is different.

Recap of Romans 11:17-31:

1. The timetable for this illustration is in _____.
2. The main thrust of the passage is:

- 1.1 Not to _____ against the branches (verse 17-18).
- 1.2 Do not be _____ about yourselves (verse 20).
- 1.3 God will graff the _____ in again (verses 23-24).
3. Some branches were _____ (verse 17).
4. Those branches were broken off because of _____ (verse 20).
5. Conclusion: The broken off branches are _____ (they) and the branches which were not broken off, “among” whom Gentiles were graffed, were _____ (little flock).
6. God broke off the branches (verse 21) when Israel _____ in the extension of mercy (EoM) (verse 22).
7. We Gentiles were branches on a _____ (verse 17).
8. After Israel fell, God graffed us Gentiles into the _____ (verse 17).
9. As such, we became partakers of God’s _____ (verses 17, 22, 30, 31).
10. Both Israel and Gentile are spoken of as _____ tree branches (verse 17).
11. One is cared for and _____ and the other is _____ (verse 17).
12. The tree cannot be Israel because it is the _____ of the tree which makes the branches holy and Israel has never been capable of being holy, producing holiness or extending it to Gentiles.
13. Only God can take that which is not holy and make it usable in his plan and purpose; therefore the tree is the tree of God’s _____ which he extended to both Israel and to Gentiles
14. What God is presently doing with Gentiles is not _____ (verses 21-22).
15. Unsaved Gentiles should “_____” that one day unbelieving Gentiles will be _____ (verse 22).
16. When that happens, God will graff believing _____ in again (verse 23).

17. God's goodness is him now showing Gentiles _____ and offering them
_____ (Romans 2:4).

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

God can cut the Gentile branches off and put them back out there. Then he will go back to his program with Israel. That is exactly what he is going to do and verse 23 says he is able to do it.

Romans 11:24 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?

Paul wants us to see the simplicity "how much more" of God being able to get back to dealing with Israel. Do not get the idea that he is done with them. He is not only able to get back to dealing with them; it is a simple thing for him to do, for they are the natural branches. But not only is God able, he is determined to do it.

Romans 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Romans 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

Here is where I see Paul switching back from saying things that pertain to unsaved Gentiles in particular, back to speaking to the saints at Rome. The use of the word "brethren" marks this change.

Compare this to Romans 1:13 and Romans 10:1.

Romans 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Romans began with Paul addressing the saints specifically. At Romans 11:13, Paul (while still talking to the saints at Rome) begins to say some things that are pointed directly at unsaved Gentiles. Then, at Romans 11:25, he leaves off with the warnings of "fear" and "take heed" and the threat of being "broken off," and begins again to address the saints directly.

***Romans 11:25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

Seven times in his epistles, the apostle Paul asks the saints “not to be ignorant” of something. Each of the times Paul introduces a doctrine by use of this phrase, he is clarifying something which is widely misunderstood. But we should also recognize that each of these doctrines is of particular interest to Satan. These are doctrinal issues which he seeks to confuse and corrupt.

Space for personal reflection and notes