

INTRODUCTION

We are studying Romans, 9, 10, and 11 about God’s past, present and future dealing with the nation of Israel. Sometimes what people think is impossible becomes a reality. For instance, I want to read to you an actual editorial from a Boston newspaper from 120 years ago:

“A man about 46 years of age giving the name of Joshua Coppersmith has been arrested in New York for attempting to extort funds from ignorant and superstitious people by exhibiting a device which he says will convey the human voice any distance over metallic wires so that it will be heard by the listener at the other end.

He calls the instrument a telephone which is obviously intended to imitate the word telegraph and win the confidence of those who know the success and the long term benefits of the telegraph. Well-informed people know that it is impossible to transmit the human voice over the wires and that were it possible to do so, the thing would be of no practical value.”

If you have ever talked on a telephone, which I am sure some of you have done a lot of, that editorial was just totally off base. A hundred years ago—just one hundred years ago—or even seventy five years ago, Romans 9, 10, and 11 talking about the nation of Israel would have made no sense to people. Some of these great Bible expositors of the last century just basically skipped over Romans 9, 10, and 11, or they would have to explain it away because there was no nation of Israel.

Since 1948 there is a nation of Israel. These scriptures are being fulfilled. They will be fulfilled. Since 1967 the nation of Israel has had control of most of the city of Jerusalem, the Holy City. We are seeing God taking his people back to Israel to restore and rebuild. Did you know that during the Middle Ages the population of Jewish people got down to below one million people? You talk about a comeback. God is doing something and we need to pay attention to it.

As we look here in Romans, chapter 11, let’s begin here with verse 16. Paul is going to introduce two word pictures and we are going to just skip one and then talk about the one that he develops. “If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy.” He is saying it was a Jewish custom to offer firstfruits offerings, and when you took the first part of a crop or the first part of the dough of bread and committed it to the Lord and it was declared to be holy, that meant that the whole lump was holy. Of course, he is talking about the nation of Israel. But, in the last part of verse 16, here’s this other picture and this is the one we will develop: “If the root is holy, so are the branches.” Now the apostle Paul is going to employ an allegory based on an olive tree. Let’s learn about it.

Verse 17. “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you,” [meaning Gentiles] “though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not

spare you either.” Verse 22 is a very important verse. “Consider therefore,” [anytime Paul says “therefore”, you need to look what it’s there for because it’s a red flag. Here’s an important statement.] “Consider, therefore, the kindness and sternness of God.” Everybody believes in the kindness, the love of God but also there is a part of his character that is called the sternness: “sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.” Verse 23. “And if they” [meaning the Jews] “do not persist in unbelief they will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!”

Verse 25 is another important verse. “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery [mousteron, not even translated, it’s transliterated, which means something that is hidden in the Old Testament, but revealed in the New] “don’t be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited.” Here’s the mystery, “Israel has experienced a hardening, a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”

I. GOD'S TREE OF LIFE: THE ALLEGORY

By then you just have to read the next few words in verse 26. “And so all Israel will be saved.” Now, you say, “Pastor, what is all this about? Anytime there is an allegory or a parable you need to understand what each component represents. We are going to spend the first part of this message examining the picture itself, the allegory itself. I call the first point, “God’s Tree of Life”. God’s Tree of Life, described as an olive tree, and that it’s an allegory. We’re going to look at what each component means, and then we’re going to talk about what it means to us personally.

1. The Root: God's promises to Israel

First of all, in this allegory, you have a root. What is the root representing? It represents God’s promises to Israel. Thousands of years ago God made a promise to Abraham, and that promise that God made to Abraham is the root of our faith today! It’s not like you have the Jewish faith over here, and then you have another tree over here planted that’s Christianity. Our roots go back to the promises God made to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Look at Galatians, 3:9. To me this says an amazing thing about the character of the scriptures, the Bible, the word of God. It says, “The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham. All nations will be blessed through you.” That was his promise. So, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

The first thing we need to understand is that our roots go all the way back to the promise God made to Abraham. All of the Old Testament promises are the root of our belief. Many times when somebody starts reading the Bible they start in Genesis, then they read Exodus, and that’s pretty exciting, but when they get to Leviticus and Numbers, they shut it down, because it starts reading like a Hebrew telephone directory. Hard name begat hard name begat hard name—you can’t even pronounce the names so you just say, “Forget it. I can’t understand the Bible.” The best way to read the Bible is not to start in Genesis and try to read all the way through. Do that

later, after you have an understanding of the scriptures. The best way to understand the Bible is to understand the New Testament first, and then once you understand that, you go back and study the Old Testament. Of course, we have the Old Testament and we have the New Testament. Someone has said, and I think this is exactly correct: “The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is by the New revealed.” In other words, between every line and every chapter of the Old Testament you can find Jesus. You can find blood atonement. Didn’t the Bible just say God gave Abraham the gospel in advance? Once you start understanding the New Testament, then all of that makes sense. That’s why in Romans, 9, 10 or 11, Paul quotes the Old Testament twelve times. He’s trying to say, “This is what the Old Testament means.”

Do you remember when Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus on that first Easter afternoon? The Bible says, starting with Moses and all the prophets, he showed them the things concerning himself. If you read the Old Testament, and you don’t find Jesus, you’d better read it again because Jesus found himself in every page of the Old Testament. That’s our roots, all the promises God made to the patriarchs.

2. The Sap: God's power to product fruit

Here’s the second component in this allegory. It also mentions “the sap”. Now, what is “the sap?” Well, that represents God’s power to produce fruit, the life-giving flow of God’s power. Look at verse 17. It says, “We now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root.” Now, the King James says “fat.” I like the word “sap” better than “fat” because we don’t think necessarily of “fat” as being life-giving.

I love olive trees. In fact, Israel is filled with olive trees. In the Garden of Gethsemane there are some very old olive trees. When olive trees get older, they don’t grow taller, they grow wider. Can any of you relate to that? They spread out. There are some olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane that at least some of the shoots are connected to roots that were there two thousand years ago the very night Jesus was in that garden. We are talking about a long-term commitment. Olive roots grow hundreds of feet underground. They search for moisture because that’s how olive trees can survive in such dry, harsh, arid climates like the desert. Those roots go so deep, absorbing moisture and nutrients from the soil, and they bring them up, and that’s in the sap, and then the sap goes out into the branches, and that’s what gives it life. So, the sap in this analogy is God’s power flowing through us. The New Testament example of that would be the life of the Holy Spirit released through us.

3. Natural Branches: The Jews (some broken off)

Here’s the third component. This allegory also mentions “natural branches”. This good olive tree already had some “natural branches” on it. Do you know whom that represents? Obviously, the Jews, talking about the Israelites. It says, “some were broken off,” and the word literally means “chopped off.” It doesn’t say all of them were. God hasn’t totally rejected his people. We read last week that there is a remnant. God has always had a remnant, but the natural branches, many of them, rejected Jesus Christ, and so they were cut off. Obviously, Jesus stood outside Jerusalem before the crucifixion, and he said, “Because you have not recognized me,” he

predicted, “An army is going to camp around you and there is going to be death in the whole city of Jerusalem because you rejected God’s message to you.”

Fast forward a few years, about 40 years to 70 A.D., and that’s exactly what happened to the city of Jerusalem; Titus and his Roman army cruelly and viciously destroyed them. If you want to know how vicious it was, just read Josephus, who watched it. Although he was a Jew, he watched it from the outside. Josephus is careful, somebody must have been counting because he said there were 115,880 bodies in the streets of Jerusalem after 70 A.D. Jewish people are the “natural branches” into God’s olive tree.

Have you ever known Jewish people who have become Christians? They are often called “completed Jews”. I don’t know about you, but I have always noticed these Jewish Christians seem to have an almost natural inclination toward the Christian faith. They seem to be more zealous. They seem to be more committed than those of us who aren’t. There are many great Jewish evangelists, like Zola Levitt, and Mark Rosenthal, who had great impact for the Kingdom of God. I like what C.S. Lewis wrote: “In a sense the converted Jew is the only normal human being in the world. All the rest of us from one point of view are a special case dealt with under emergency conditions.” The only really natural branches in the olive tree are Jewish people who trust Christ.

4. New Branches: The Gentiles (some grafted in)

Here’s the fourth component. This picture also talks about “new branches”. Who does that represent? Well, they represent the Gentiles: that is us. It says, “Some of us,” not all, “have been grafted in to the trunk.” I don’t want to give you a long spiel on horticulture. You can go to the local nursery to get that, but I have been studying, and I talked to Bob Wells, who is in the “tree” business. He helped me understand “grafting”. What you do is you take a “good stock”, like a trunk with a root intact, and you can take branches (they don’t have to be great branches) and you can graft the branches into that stock and it will produce fruit. Do you know how that is done? Well, you cut off a branch, and then you make an incision into the good stock. Then, you attach that branch to it, and you make sure that it adheres. It’s bound and perhaps some type of adhesive is used so that the two will connect. If it “takes” life flows into those new branches. I learned some stuff I did not know about grafting. For instance, if you take a nectarine branch and graft it onto a peach tree will it grow nectarines or peaches? It will grow nectarines, because it is the nature of the branch. In California they have some trees that they call a “fruit cocktail tree,” because it is a citrus trunk and they have grafted in an orange branch over here, a lemon branch over here, and a grapefruit branch over here, and each branch produces different fruit. It’s amazing what can be done with grafting. This was known centuries ago even during the Bible times.

Paul says there was some old wild root over here—that’s us, Gentiles. No hope of producing any good fruit. Just nothing. And God has graciously taken many of us and has grafted us into the side of that good tree. Do you remember I said there had to be an incision? Some have said, “Just as Eve was born out of the side of Adam, so was the church born out of the wound in the side of Jesus. We know for sure that by his wounds we are healed. So we are attached to the suffering, and to the incision on Christ. If we stay connected, great things will happen.

5. The Purpose: Olives (fruit). Fruit = The outward expression of an inner nature

There is one other thing in this picture I want you to see before we get to the point. You say, "Well, what's the purpose?" This may be so simple, it just kind of escapes you, but the whole point of this picture is olives, fruit. An olive tree without olives is worthless. They don't grow olive trees for firewood. They don't grow olive trees for shade; they grow olive trees for olives! In Bible times and even today, olive oil was very valuable. Olives were a delicacy, as they are even today, and so an olive tree or a branch that does not produce olives is "dead wood," and it's no good.

The point I am trying to get to is that as Christians you and I need to make sure our lives are producing fruit. You say, "What is fruit?" Let me give you a definition of what fruit is. I'm talking about fruit trees and fruit on Christians. Fruit is the outward expression of an inward nature. It is the outward expression of an inner nature. You say, "I've never heard fruit called that before." Let me explain it.

My father went to Louisiana Tech over here where he graduated in forestry. My dad could recognize all the trees in a forest. We could drive through the woods, and my dad could not only say, "That's a pin oak," he could give you the Latin phylum and species. He could do that for any tree. He could not only tell you, "That's a pine tree." He could tell you what kind of pine tree it was. It just fascinated me. I used to say, "Dad, what kind of tree is that?...What kind of tree is *that*?" Now, me, I'm not nearly that smart when it comes to trees. I can hardly tell the difference between a pine tree, and a hardwood tree, and a spaghetti tree. I'm just not very good when it comes to trees. I'll tell you what I do know. When I see a tree over here and there's an apple hanging on that tree, I know that's an apple tree. When I see a tree with an orange hanging on it, that's an orange tree. Do you know what the fruit does? The fruit reveals outwardly the inner nature of that tree.

The same is true in the Christian life. When there is fruit in your life what you are expressing outwardly is the inner character and nature of Jesus Christ. That's what the fruit of the Spirit is. You say, "Well, I thought the fruit of the spirit according to Galatians 5:22, was love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, and self control." Well, that is the nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Love. Jesus is Joy. He is Peace. When I see pecans hanging on a tree or pecans under a tree, that's a pecan tree. When I see a person that there are some attributes in their life, some outward sign that lets me know that person has the inward nature of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 7, Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them." He said, "A good fruit won't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree won't produce good fruit." Now that's the allegory. That's setting us up for the meaning of the whole point.

II. GOD'S TRUTH FOR US: THE APPLICATION

Now, let's go to the second thing here, not only God's Tree of Life, but God's truth for us. This is the application. What is it saying to us? What is this picture of an olive tree and I'm a wild branch that's been grafted in? What is this saying to me? Well, there are three things you need to consider.

1. Sternness: Don't boast about your fruit! God's Warning: You may be cut-off from usefulness

Notice verse 22 says that word "consider, therefore". That word "consider" means "to stare at, to study, to ponder". First of all consider God's sternness. Don't brag about your fruit. It says in verse 22, "Consider the sternness of God," so that you won't be conceited. You won't be arrogant. Don't brag about anything in your life because here's what he says. He says, "You don't support the root, the root supports you." Anything good in your life as a Christian doesn't come from whom you are. It comes from the life of God, that life-giving sap, as it were, that runs through you. The fruit in your life is not something you have done. So that God is the one who gets the glory, be careful that you don't brag about it. Three times he says: don't boast, don't be arrogant, don't be conceited. It produces humility to realize God is the source of every good thing in our lives.

Here's God's warning. He says if you are not careful, you may be cut off from usefulness. Did you read in that passage that it talks about how even these grafted branches could be cut off? God says if I cut off those natural branches, don't you think I will cut off these that have been grafted in. Sometimes, people read that and they say, "Oh, no! I thought we believed once saved, always saved. I thought that once you were a Christian you could never lose your salvation." I don't think this is talking about losing your salvation, I think it is talking about losing your effectiveness, losing your usefulness, becoming unfruitful.

I like Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the New Testament. You can get it at the bookstore. It's just called *The Message*. Understand it is not a translation; it is a paraphrase. This is how he paraphrases verse 22: "Be sure you stay alert to these qualities of gentle kindness and ruthless severity that exist side by side in God. Ruthless with the dead wood, but gentle with the grafted shoot. But, don't presume on God. The moment you become dead wood, you are out of here!" That's pretty blunt, isn't it? I think it is possible for a Christian to be so rebellious and disobedient to their father that he removes them from a place of fruitfulness and usefulness, but they are still part of the family of God. I'll give you examples of that.

Do you remember in the Old Testament the people of God, the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness after they refused to go in Kadesh Barnea? For forty years they wandered in the wilderness, out of God's will...plop, plop, plop...in the desert until one by one they died. The amazing thing is for every day of those forty years God was still feeding them manna. I think they were still his children, they had just lost their usefulness, they had lost their fruitfulness; they were just miserable.

Listen to me. I'm convinced the most miserable person on the planet Earth is not a lost person. The most miserable person on the planet Earth is a Christian out of the will of God, a back-slidden, fruitless Christian, because you have a sense of being cut off from God's fruitfulness. That was Paul's continual fear, that one day he would do something that would cause him to be disqualified for fruitfulness and usefulness. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 9 (we're changing metaphors in the middle of the stream here) he uses an athletic metaphor, but the point is the same. He says, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get

a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body,” [that means I discipline myself] “and I make it my slave so that after I have preached to others” [here is his fear] “I, myself, will not be disqualified for the prize.” Paul says, “I’m so careful...I don’t want to do anything wrong, I don’t want to say anything wrong, I don’t want to get into the wrong kind of relationship...I want to stay holy and pure so God can use me because my greatest fear is that sometime in the future...chop...I’ll become disqualified for the prize. Not for heaven, that’s not the prize. The prize is the crown God gives out: the usefulness.

Look around you. Oh, they may not be here in this room today. But don’t you know a lot of people—I do—who at one time were serving God, who at one time were faithful for God, who at one time were on fire for God, and now they are just pffft...chopped off...and they are absolutely miserable. God says, “You had better be careful that it doesn’t happen.” There’s his warning.

2. Kindness: Don't neglect your attachment to the root! God's Welcome: Permit my life to flow through you

Secondly, he says, “Consider God’s kindness.” Now, here’s the point. Don’t neglect your attachment to the root. Don’t neglect your attachment to the root. The key to fruitfulness is this. God’s welcome is “Permit my life to flow through you.” Remember I said the sap was the power of God to produce fruit? The key to fruitfulness in the Christian life is allowing the Holy Spirit to flow out of the vine, out of the root and the trunk in and through us. Look what Jesus said in John 15:4, it is the same horticultural analogy. He says, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you.” No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must “stick tightly” in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you “stick tightly,” or “remain” in me.

Now, what is the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Love, joy and peace. Let’s start with those three. The way you don’t live the Christian life is this way. “I’m going to try to be loving today. I’m going to try to be joyful today. I’m going to try to have peace today.” That’s not the way you live the Christian life. The Bible says he says, “Without me, you can do nothing.” Do you know what you do? You make sure you are so closely attached to Jesus Christ and to that connection. That’s what true worship is. That connection is so firm that the life, the character, the inner nature of Jesus Christ flows out through you.

Let me ask you a question: Who can be more loving, David Dykes or Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ. Who can express more joy: David Dykes or Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ. Who can have more peace: David Dykes or Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ. It’s the same with you. He wants to let his life flow out through you. So, our job is to stay stuck to the vine. I don’t know about you, folks, but I’m telling you, I’m stuck on Jesus. And, I’m going to stick with him all my life. So, that’s God’s kindness.

3. Plan: Don't despair about the future! God's Wonder: He is able to graft them back in

Finally, here’s God’s plan: Don’t despair about the future. God has a plan. We’ll talk more about it next week, but his plan is perfect, and his plan is amazing to me. It is wonderful. Here’s God’s wonder. There was God’s warning, and then God’s welcome, and here’s God’s wonder. “He is

able to graft them back in.” Who? The Israelites. If you don’t believe that, just look at what it says there in verse 23, “if they do not persist in unbelief, they’ll be grafted in for God is able to graft them back in again.” And then it says down there in verse 25 about this mystery, this wonder.... he says, “Right now they are experiencing a *pyrosis*. That word *pyrosis* means a hardening, almost like a callous. It was even used sometimes to speak of a white stone that would cover an eye sometimes to cool off or something. The picture is that right now partially, that’s not completely because there’s a remnant of Jews who are Christians. Right now partially, many of them have their eyes blinded. They have been blinded by unbelief.

Do you remember what happened to the apostle Paul (whose name used to be Saul) when he got saved? He was a good Jewish zealot going around killing Christians, denying the divinity of Jesus Christ. Suddenly he meets Jesus on the road to Damascus and Boom! That’s a pretty life-changing experience. The Bible says he was blinded. He went into Damascus, and there was a disciple by the name of Ananias who came and laid hands on him and told him to receive the Holy Spirit, and this is what happened. The Bible says “there were scales that fell from his eyes.” (*pyrosis*) Suddenly, he said, “Do you know what I’ve been missing all along? I can see clearly now.”

What happened individually to Saul is going to happen to the entire nation of Israel in the future. You say, “When’s that going to happen?” When Jesus comes back. Didn’t you just read verse 25? It says, “the hardening is there in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in”. I believe in God’s plan he has already decided exactly how many people are going to comprise the church (Gentiles) and when that last person, I mean it may be this morning at Green Acres Baptist Church, or it may be some other church, it may be at some mission around the world somewhere. When that last person is added to the church, the body of Christ, Jesus will say, “That’s it. The church is complete. I’m going to get the church.” He’ll rapture the church out of here. You just read, folks. It all fits together.

I’ll give you one example. Zechariah 12. This was written 500 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This was written 250 years before they even had crucifixion as a mode of execution. This is what it says. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced.” Pierced? Wait a minute, who was the one that the Jews pierced with nails? “They will look on the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and they will grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.” That’s what it says in verse 26, “and all Israel will be saved.” This is what is going to happen. When the church is raptured out of here and Jesus is realized to be whom he really is, the scales are going to fall off the eyes of the Jews and they are going to literally weep when they recognize their Messiah. That’s happening partially now, but there will be an amazing coming to Christ after the rapture of the church.

CONCLUSION

When I first came to pastor Green Acres, I had the privilege of going down to Belize, because our church has done a lot of work down there through the years. I stayed in the home of Otis Brady down there who was a long time missionary there who has since retired. He told me a story about what happened in Belize City several years before. They had had a young Jewish

family come and move into the house beside them. This man worked for an oil company and he had been transferred down there because they were doing some work. Otis and his wife who were older adopted this family. They became some of their closest friends. They became like the grandparents to those children. They were just wonderful friends. Of course, Otis lovingly and very tactfully shared what he believed. Of course, this family had their beliefs: Judaism.

One Christmas Otis suggested he and his wife celebrate Hanukkah with this Jewish family and in return they would celebrate Christmas over at the Brady house. So, they did that. They went over and enjoyed all the celebration of Hanukkah, and on Christmas Day, this Jewish family came into their home. Otis said he had prepared two pieces of paper. One piece of paper was 30 Old Testament scriptures, prophecies about Jesus. On the other sheet of paper were 30 New Testament verses that are the fulfillment of all of these Old Testament prophecies. He said for their Christmas celebration he turned to his friend and said, "I want you to read the Old Testament verses because of course you are Jewish, and I then will read the New Testament fulfillment. Old Testament, New Testament fulfillment. Old Testament, New Testament fulfillment—over 30 times. He said it was a wonderful celebration. But the family was moved back to New York before they ever trusted Jesus Christ. However, they continued to correspond and be friends. After they had been back in New York for about six months, one day Otis got a fat letter in the mail! They noticed the return address was from their friends, the Jewish family. He turned the letter to open it, and written across the back of the envelope in big letters was this. "We have found the Messiah!!!!" He opened the envelope and read this long letter about how they had finally realized Jesus was the Messiah. They literally said, "It was like scales fell off our eyes, and we saw him for who he is." Today that family has moved to Israel where they are a part of a messianic movement that is mostly underground. It has to be in this nation of Israel today.

God is able to graft them back in again. So, what kind of branch are you today? Have you been grafted in to the trunk? Is the life of Jesus flowing through you? Many of you are already Christians. The problem is that some of you because of sin or rebellion in your life face the danger of being chopped off from usefulness, fruitfulness and joy. So, today, why don't you say, "Lord Jesus, I'm going to stick as close to you as I can. I'm going to live as holy and pure for you so that you can produce your fruit through me."

OUTLINE

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1. The Root: God's promises to Israel

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. *Galatians 3:8-9*

2. The Sap: God's power to product fruit

3. Natural Branches: The Jews (some broken off)

4. New Branches: The Gentiles (some grafted in)

5. The Purpose: Olives (fruit). Fruit = The outward expression of an inner nature

II. GOD'S TRUTH FOR US: THE APPLICATION

Consider God's:

1. Sternness: Don't boast about your fruit! God's Warning: You may be cut-off from usefulness

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. *1 Corinthians 9:25-27*

2. Kindness: Don't neglect your attachment to the root! God's Welcome: Permit my life to flow through you

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. *John 15:4*

3. Plan: Don't despair about the future! God's Wonder: He is able to graft them back in

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son." *Zechariah 12:10*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes