
Spiritual Formation Part 29

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Do you have Fullness?

Romans 11:11-36

Paul speaking to an agrarian culture uses an illustration that all would know and understand intimately. He gives them a warning and at the same time encourages them, stating there is hope, the ultimate Hope that our Lord gives. We have meaning, we have a purpose, and we are kept in Christ, sealed by His promise and work. Both Israel and the Church are in God's plan and have a future. Even when it all seems like gloom, such as the period of Jeremiah, God always has His remnant (1 Kings 19; Jer. 23:3-4; 42:2), He has His faithful people. The question we ought to examine is, *are we one of them?* If so, *what are we doing about it?* Paul crafts an image from the workings of a tree, its roots, and branches then equates it to the role of the Gentile and Jew. Both have a future, hope and purpose. If you are ever discouraged and feel left out in life, you are not! We can have ultimate hope and peace in Christ with no fear of rejection, because He will not reject us, even when we reject Him. We will undergo the harsh reality of consequences due to our wrong decisions to dare flee from Him. Not because God is a killjoy out to get us, but because of the natural laws of the universe that are to sustain us. The sharp knife that is designed to be a tool can also cut our hand by our misdirection. But, His love is always there waiting on our faith to embrace Him, so we can feel and know His embrace already upon us! We may not be able to always explain or understand God, but we can have faith and trust, to praise Him because of His love for us.

- *They stumbled*, Israel rejected Christ, and the Gentiles became fully adopted children of God with full status and blessings, not just as an "I told you so" or out of spite; rather because this was God's plan all along. The plan comes full circle, as Israel was to bring the Gentiles to God, now the Gentiles will be used to help bring Israel back to God (Gen. 12:1-3; Deut, 32:21; Rom 10:19).
- *Salvation has come to the Gentiles*, as the branch of "Jew" was cut; new sprouts rose up in its place. Through this, He will work in their hearts and minds. Never think you are indispensable, God can always raise people up better than you, but He still desires you!
- *Fullness*, here is referring to how we are receiving Christ, fully or partially? It is about commitment and service. *Fullness* here also means how God is restoring us. The theological debate is who, how, when and how many will God restore in Israel, but the better question is, *how is He restoring you?*
- A lot of commentators make a lot out of what Israel does and carry it to an extreme. The fact remains that we just do not know the details, only that it will

be. It is for us to learn trust, perseverance, and reliance on our Lord; so that we are resting on Him and not on our abilities and knowledge.

- *Lump/ dough*, refers to the “first fruits” offering, this is the dough made from the grain offering that was offered to the Lord (Nub. 15:17-21). This offering sanctifies the rest, signifying for us God’s plan for us is scared. This means God pledges a promise for us, which we need to receive by pledging our faith.
- *A wild olive tree* (Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6), refers to Gentiles who have been let in the “club” a sacred relationship with God through Christ, that is contrary to logic or nature. Wild tree shoots were grafted into domestic cultured dying trees to help save them or help bear more fruit! Then the unproductive branches were pruned off.
- *Fear*, here it is the awe of Proverbs 1, being respectful without any arrogance.
- Paul gives us a concluding Doxology of Wonder, we have hope and ultimate Hope beyond the hope we can see! The only barrier to this hope will be our discouragement, our feelings all resulting due to a lack of faith and spiritual maturity, for this impacts all that we are and do in life (Psalm 14:7; Isa. 27:9; 59:20-21)!

We are grafted in by faith, the Jews were cut off because of unbelief, not to make room, for God has plenty of room! Therefore it is our duty to honor and respect Jews as our kinsmen. Why? Because Paul tells us that the Jews are the forerunners and co-partakers of the faith we share (Rom. 4)! God never regrets His choices, or changes His position, because He is God: beyond space, time, thought, and our control; He is all-knowing and all-powerful.

Many scholars debate the understanding of “*Fullness*” vs. 25” its possible meaning refers to a number of Gentiles who will be saved, after God has turned His back on Israel (Mark 9:47). This may also refer to the specific number of individuals who are to be saved before Christ returns. But this view is not strictly supportable by any other Scripture (maybe Rev. 6:11). Paul may also be referring to specific prophecies already given in the Old Testament. Elsewhere in the NT “*fullness*” means wealth, or as predicted. Fullness for a Christian is first seeking Christ and His work in you (Matthew 6:33-34), so you are pursuing righteousness and all that is good, as a way to glorify Christ as Lord. Fullness equals knowing who you are in Christ, and what He did for you on the Cross—that we are complete in Him (Mark 7:1-13; Matthew 5:6; 16:24-27; Romans 6: 12; 19-23; Galatians 2:20-21; 5:19-21; Ephesians 5: 15-21; 1 John 4:19)!

If we want God to be kind to us, we need to do something about it ourselves; be kind back, and to each other (Gal.5). One day the disobedience of our will and heart will end. As Israel will turn, so will the Gentiles and disobedient Christians. Repentance will be to our Lord's glory, as we turn away from our wicked ways to His best (Rom. 1:16; 3:19-23)!

We may not be in the loop with God's plans and purpose, but we can take comfort that He is in control.

1. God does not need us to reconcile all the truths and reasoning of theology, or His dealings with humankind: He only desires our simple faith.
2. We can praise Him for His glory, even when we are being persecuted, and are suffering.
3. We are to keep our focus on who He is and not on our circumstances.

We must realize God's providence and plan for our global Church, our local church, and our personal lives. Besides salvation? It is all about our growth and maturity in Him! For it is biblical and proper to help one another in need! Some people in Christendom may feel this inappropriate. Hence why most Christians do not serve or give, or give as well as serve little. Of course these Christians are the first to complain, gossip and be obtuse towards those who do! It is my contention that a mature Christian will serve our Lord, stand up for the poor and oppress and seek all they can to help. They will show their faith by their daily lives. Not to earn salvation, but to respond. God gives us all we have and the ability and the resources, and our carrot on the stick is the hope He gives us! I say this in love and in sadness: The only barrier is our apathy, which comes from our lack of faith and spiritual formation! We are to focus on His goodness and faithfulness, so we can build and model such characters. It is all about God's greatness and our response with trust and obedience. If we do not stand up and help another in great need while we go on in our plenty, this may be the true sign we may be lost or at least missed out on opportunities and the Lord's favor. Our apathy has become the god we worship! What can we do to line up to God? Study the Bible with a proper attitude. The goal of Bible study and worship is to develop His character, and follow His will. It is not just about the gaining of knowledge, but the indwelling of His love. Everything about life, thought, deed, and meaning is all about God; God is everything (not pantheism). Our service is because He first loved us, and our love back to Him.

Questions

1. What is a craft project you did that you were proud of? If you were a tree, what kind would you be and why?
2. As a tree what do you need for nourishment? Now equate this to your Christian walk, what do you need from God for nourishment?
3. What do you think your future, hope and purpose is? How often do you feel discouraged, inadequate or feel left out in life? How is He restoring you?
4. When you have such thoughts, how can the knowledge that Christ will not reject us, even when we reject Him, help you?
5. What do you suppose is the ultimate hope and peace in Christ you have?

6. What is in the way of your thinking and walk in Christ to fully acknowledge that God's love is always there? That His love is waiting on our faith to embrace Him, so we can feel and know His embrace already upon us?
7. What are some consequences due to wrong decisions you have observed in others or yourself?
8. Has it ever frustrated you because you may not have been able to explain or understand God?
9. Even if you have been frustrated, do you have true faith and trust, to praise Him because of His love for you?
10. If you were a Jew and you know that Israel rejected Christ, and the Gentiles became fully adopted children of God with full status and blessings as adopted Jews, how would you feel?
11. We are to never think we are indispensable, God can always raise people up better than us, but He desires you anyway! So does your attitude reflect the humbleness and privilege to serve Him? Or do you serve Him out of obligation or some other reason?
12. What is the difference between serving God from a privileged and humbleness attitude to serving Him because you feel you must, out of obligation?
13. It is for us to learn trust, perseverance, and reliance on our Lord; so how do you do that?
14. How can you be a Christian who rests on Him and not on your abilities and knowledge?
15. God is all-knowing and all-powerful. He never regrets His choices, or changes His position, because He is God: beyond space, time, thought, and our control. How can this knowledge of God be a light to your spiritual growth?
16. God is a gracious and accommodating God, as He reaches out to us, all people in all time. How can these aspects of His character effect the way you see and treat others who are different from you?
17. Paul was perhaps a very prideful and arrogant Pharisee before His conversion. Why does he spend so much time writing and speaking against being arrogant and prideful?
18. What is your understanding of "*Fullness?*"
19. If we want God to be kind to us, we need to do something about it. What do we need to do?

20. What needs to happen for the disobedience of our will and heart to end?
21. What can the church do to change the ways of disobedient Christians?
22. Why would repentance give glory to our Lord?
23. Do you see God with wonder? If not, why? If so, why?
24. Are you living in response to His love, in the value of love? If not, what do you need to do to root yourself firmer in love to God and then to those around you?
25. Some “carnal Christians” are the first to complain, gossip and be obtuse towards those who serve and are growing in the Lord! So what can your church do, in the parameters of love and care, about this rampant problem?

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