

Romans 11:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Analysis

For if God spared not the natural branches—ei gar ho theos tōn kata physin kladōn ouk epheisato (εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων οὐκ ἐφείσατο). The phrase kata physin (κατὰ φύσιν, "according to nature") emphasizes Israel's natural position as covenant people. If God broke off natural branches due to unbelief, the warning to Gentiles is sobering: **take heed lest he also spare not thee** (mēpōs oude sou pheisētai, μήπως οὐδὲ σοῦ φείσῃται).

The logic is a fortiori again: if God disciplined His own covenant people, how much more will He discipline grafted-in Gentiles who presume on grace? The verb pheidomai (φείδομαι, "spare") suggests judgment withheld or enacted. Paul is not teaching loss of salvation but warning against presumption. Churches, like individuals, can fall under divine judgment for persistent unbelief and arrogance (Revelation 2-3). Gentile Christianity is not immune to the discipline that befell unbelieving Israel.

Historical Context

This warning proved prophetic. Gentile Christianity did develop supersessionist arrogance, contributing to centuries of antisemitism and persecution of Jews. Paul's warning—if heeded—would have prevented immense evil.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's treatment of 'natural branches' teach about His impartiality and holiness?
2. How should this warning apply to churches and Christian movements that become proud or presumptuous?
3. What is the relationship between assurance of individual salvation and corporate warnings to the church?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	ὁ	θεὸς	τῶν	κατὰ	φύσιν	κλάδων	οὐκ
if	For		God			the natural	branches	not
G1487	G1063	G3588	G2316	G3588	G2596	G5449	G2798	G3756
φείσεται	μήπως	οὐδὲ	σοῦ	φείσεται				
he	also	not	thee	he				
G5339	G3381	G3761	G4675	G5339				

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:32 (Parallel theme): He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Jude 1:5 (Parallel theme): I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

