



The Wisdom Of The Olive Tree

Judges 9:8-9 KJV The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. [9] But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

I. INTRODUCTION—BACKGROUND OF THE PARABLE

-Leading up to the text that we read is a miserable tale. Gideon is dead and Israel almost immediately reverts back to her idolatrous ways. Prior to Gideon's death, his victory made the people offer to him the role of a king. However he insisted that Israel remain a theocracy instead of becoming a monarchy (8:22) and then promptly went and acted like a king.

- He amassed a fortune—8:26.
- He acquired royal robes and took an ephod to consult God—8:27.
- He made his worst mistake when he formed a large harem and begin to have children—8:30.

-Gideon's ephod was what created the difficulty. You would think that after Gideon had torn down his father's altar to Baal, he would have recognized the danger of putting something before Israel that could be served for idolatrous purposes.

-His dangerous device was formed from gold and contained all of the trappings of the ephod. His son, Abimilech, was carefully taking notice of his actions and what his father took in moderation; the son took in excess and took Israel a long way down the wrong path.

-Abimilech sets himself up as an impromptu leader over his seventy brothers. There is a maddening hungry ambition about him to be a king. He will resort to all manner of mayhem to capture the place of ruler-ship that his father had achieved.

-To eliminate the competition from his brothers, he hires some mercenaries and they go out to kill his brothers and manage to wreak a bloody calamity on them. All of the brothers are slain except for one named Jotham who manages to barely escape.

-Jotham takes flight to Mount Gerizim which had been a place to pronounce blessings but on this day the opposite would occur. Apparently an amphitheater of sorts, Jotham climbs its eight hundred feet to the summit and then uses the great acoustics to address Israel.

-He tells them a story of the trees in the forest that want a king. They approach the olive tree that turns it down, and then fig tree that turns it down, and then the grape vine turns it down leaving only a bramble bush to be the king over the forest.

-The bramble is a far lesser plant than all of the other trees. In fact it is a menace to agriculture and its only good use was to be burned. Yet it was to be crowned as the king of the trees.

-The point of Jotham's parable became clear in that all of the other brothers would have served in the role Gideon had vacated rather than Abimilech who had bramble bush qualities about him. But despite that speech, Abimilech became the "bramble king" for a short period of time over Israel.

-Just in passing, notice that the least qualified are generally the most ambitious. It is the under-equipped who often think they have the capacity and power to rule those who really ought to be leading them. Small men are often the most

ambitious and for what they lack in character they make up in noise and overt displays of raw power.

-This little bramble king wouldn't last very long. He would die after a three year reign when a millstone was dropped from a tower by a woman (Judges 9:50-57) and fractured his skull.

II. THE OLIVE TREE

-So our text picks up with what the olive tree says during the conversation among the trees, vines, and the bramble. This parable is literally loaded with sermons for those who are willing to diligently work them out. I would like to isolate one part of this parable for now.

Judges 9:9 KJV But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

-There is great wisdom that comes from this olive tree in its reply. Our generation has a need for faithfulness like it never has before.

A. The Lessons of the Faithful Olive Tree

-There are several lessons that are gathered from the actions of the faithful olive tree.

1. Don't Give In To Every Whim and Urge—Should I?

-The olive tree raised a question to the response to the request to be the king of the trees. 'Should I?' is a wonderful response to the opportunities that life will sometimes throw in our direction.

-Just because the opportunity is there doesn't necessarily mean that you need to pursue it! If you aren't careful you can make a choice on a whim that will put you five or ten years behind as you try to live through the fallout of that choice.

-Paul said that all things are lawful to me but all things are not expedient for me (1 Cor. 10:23). That is what the olive tree understood when he said, "Should I?"

-Faithfulness knows that just from being steady that there are pains and troubles that are going to be avoided. There are also rewards that faithfulness understands will take place if it just remains consistently in one place.

-Changing horses in midstream opens us up to fresh temptations, struggles, and doubts. Great blessings are gained when a man is willing just to stay in the fight and work through the challenges instead of looking for an easier place to serve.

In the Battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. Alexander the Great worked with a masterful strategy that proved to be the decisive point in the fight. His soldiers were fighting against the Persian Army of King Darius III who had an overwhelming advantage in number. It was 200,000 to 50,000 and it should have proved to be the point of victory for the Persians but it did not.

One of the first things that Alexander did was allow several of his scouts to be captured by the Persians. When the Persians began to interrogate the men, they all said the same thing, "Alexander the Great is going to attack at night." So Darius kept his entire army up all night while Alexander allowed his men to sleep all night in preparation for the battle the next day. By the time the sun came up the Persian army were all exhausted.

But the second thing that he did took place with a battle plan in which he formed a wedge of his soldiers. At the center of the formation were the foot soldiers that were very proficient with javelins. Once Darius saw the attack pattern he sent 300 of his chariots forward in an effort to cut through the Grecian army. These chariots were equipped with two men who could fire their bows but the real danger was the long razor-like swords that were attached to the wheels. The Persians would race through an army and waves of soldiers would be cut down by the spinning blades. However, Alexander knew that this was the strategy that the Persians would use and when the chariots came racing down, the javelins begin to literally rain on the charioteers. It wasn't too long until the division had ground to a halt because of injury or death.

Alexander knew their troops were an army of mercenaries and they did not have a loyalty to each other or to the king. When the chariots went down, there was great distress among the soldiers. During their hesitation, Alexander led his elite soldiers in the center of the fight and it was almost as if the Red Sea were parting before him and his men. With

the presence of his great black warhorse, his flashing jewel-encrusted helmet, and flowing red cape, he flung himself into the middle of the battle.

By doing this he was able to catch King Darius in the midst of the fight. Darius took to flight running from him in panic. The battle was left to his generals who also began to flee. When the news of this rushed through the lines, the Persians were overwhelmed and defeated by Alexander the Great.

Because he stayed exactly where he was supposed to stay in the middle of the fight, it paid huge dividends for him. He refused to panic in the midst of adversity and pressed on.

-You can't give in to every whim and urge that comes to you in life. There are times that you have to be just like the olive tree and stand in the midst of the struggle. You will build your life to greatness when you do this!

2. Faithfulness Equals Usefulness—Leave My Fatness.

-Not only did the olive tree ask the great question of 'should I?' he also added something to that.

"Should I leave my fatness?" or perhaps a way to rephrase it would be like this "Should I leave my usefulness?"

-There are some facts about the olive tree that can help us to consider the greatness of the Christian life.

- The normal life span of an olive tree is from 500 to 900 years old. Some have even been known to have lived 1000 years.

- Some olive trees range in height from 10 to 60 feet depending on the variety and the pruning process.

- Olive trees do not bear fruit until 5 to 8 years old and don't reach full development until 20 years old.

- They mature and are at full production from 35 to 150 years of age.

- The average tree produces 41 to 54 pounds of olives per year, or the equivalent of 4 to 5 liters of oil per year.

- The record for an olive tree was one that yielded 800 kg of olives in a single year. This is 1760 pounds of olives.

- The oil is removed from the olives through a process of pressure that uses no heat or solvents.

- Revered for its fragrance, the golden oil of the olive was used in ancient civilizations as a body ointment and to heal wounds.

- The early Egyptians used olive oil to ease the movement of the great stones used to build the pyramids.

- The ancient Greeks burned olive oil in lamps as a source of light.

- Worldwide olive oil production is 460 million gallons a year.

- Worldwide olive oil consumption is 486 million gallons a year.

-There are many spiritual lessons that come from these facts about olive trees and olives.

-Faithfulness speaks of being in a place for a long time and serving well. If the average tree lives for 500 to 900 years, then you must understand that you can be productive in a place for a long time.

-These trees had to contend with the drought, diseases, pestilence, and sometimes even poor skills from the farmer. But it still remains faithful. It reminds me of what Paul said about his ministry and what he had to prevail through:

- In journeyings often

- In perils of waters,

- In perils of robbers,

- In perils by mine own countrymen,

- In perils by the heathen,

- In perils in the city,

- In perils in the wilderness,
- In perils in the sea,
- In perils among false brethren;
- In weariness and painfulness,
- In watchings often,
- In hunger and thirst,
- In fastings often,
- In cold and nakedness.

-Yet not a single one of those obstacles kept him from producing “olives and oil.” There are times that you just have to put your foot down and refuse to move off of the foundation God has placed you on! Faithfulness means endurance and because you are faithful there is a usefulness that God has for your life!

-Olive trees do not begin to bear fruit for 5 to 8 years after they have been planted. Far too often the devil tries to point out our ineffectiveness when God never intended for our lives to reach a place of production until after a sense of spiritual maturity has begun to take place.

-If faithfulness leads to usefulness then we have to incorporate a sense of patience when God is working out things in our own heart.

- Sometimes trials come to teach us how to worship through them.
- Sometimes problems come to teach us how to pray through them.
- Sometimes dilemmas of life come to us so that God can show us lessons in His Word.
- Sometimes seasons of trouble come to us so we can appreciate the seasons of blessing.
- Sometimes the Lord uses droughts to make us sink our roots even deeper into the Word.

-Just because you may not be bearing fruit on your time frame does not mean that you are not exactly on God’s schedule. Don’t give in to the cry of those who want to crown you king of a much lesser kingdom!

- If you are going to grow. . . .
- If you are going to provide fruit. . .
- If you are going to bring oil to the vessel. . .
- If you are going to develop fully in the faith. . .
- If you are going to bring light to this dark generation. . .
- If you are going to bring fragrance and healing to others. . .

YOU MUST LEARN THE LESSON OF FAITHFULNESS!!!

-This is why you have to do as the olive tree said in the parable, “I can’t leave my fatness. . . I can’t leave my production. . . I can’t leave my blessing. . .”

The Jerusalem Bible—Must I forego my oil.

New English Bible—What! Leave my rich oil.

Knox—I cannot forgo this rich influence of mine.

Berkeley Bible—Shall I give up my rich oil.

-If there isn’t any oil that is seemingly coming from your life, stay the course and remain faithful! In time oil will pour

out of your life in a way that will astound you.

-Once the privilege of production starts flowing in your life temptation will still be there but you will find the upward pull of perfection that will help you ward it off!

-Stay the course! Fight the good fight! Reach for the prize!

3. Faithfulness Means There is a Focus—They Honor God and Man.

· Resist the temptation to follow your urges and whims.

· Don't leave the fatness of your production.

· Honor God and man with your sacrifice.

-The Hebrew word for "fatness" is *deshen* which literally means "the ashes of the sacrifice." Throughout the Old Testament the majority of the references are associated with sacrifices. The crux of the matter is this. . . "How can I leave my sacrifice behind to attempt to work in a lesser venue?"

-Sacrifice is very closely related to production. But we don't get paid down here, we get paid over there!

-Once the privilege of production starts flowing in your life temptation will still be there but you will find the upward pull of perfection that will help you ward it off!

· When you are called to leave your nets. . . Do It!

· When you are called to leave your money tables. . . Do It!

· When you are called to bear a Cross. . . Do It!

· When you are called to embrace self-denial. . . Do It!

· When you are called to give up your selfish life. . . Do It!

· When you want to say, "It is an impossible demand!". . . Embrace the call!

· When you want to say, "I have other plans for my life!" . . . Follow the Lord!

-Love doubles itself by loving not by hoarding. Truth in us increases by being true. Make the sacrifice!

III. CONCLUSION—WE DON'T GET PAID DOWN HERE!

Years ago, at Because of the Times, a young man named Henry who had an incredibly troubled life gave a bit of his testimony. He lived in New Orleans and someone invited him to come and see the Easter drama called Messiah that they did at the Pentecostals of Alexandria. He was living a life that revolved around drinking, drugging, and immorality. But when he walked in that night to the drama, he had never seen or heard such as what he did that night in Alexandria. He ended up being filled with the Holy Ghost and being baptized in Jesus Name!

Afterwards, they begin to disciple him and his life became a roaring witness of the delivering power of God. At the end of the testimony, Pastor Anthony Mangun asked him to quote one of his homespun poems. There was a great motivating power in the poem by Henry on that night. It goes like this:

As for Me

Dangling over eternity are many unlearned souls,

Gripping the bands of God's mercy,

Stretching them all they can go,

Living the most deceptive nightmare,

As it is written, they are living a lie,

They can't even allow themselves the luxury of breaking down to cry,

Unable to see the big picture,
Quite frankly not even a desire to,
Plagiarizing the attributes of God,
Their purpose they haven't a clue,
Full of the world's wisdom,
Full of greed, pride and fame,
Standing at the brink of condemnation,
Too much money to feel any shame.
Their missing it, Mama,
Let 'em play with their blasphemous toys,
The truth is, Hell is gonna be full of good 'ol boys.
But as for me,
I am an obstacle that all of Hell cannot cross,
I'm employed by the Creator,
El Shaddai is my Boss,
I work the mornings,
I work the evenings,
I work all night long,
The time clock's in Heaven,
I get paid when I get Home!

-So when the devil is trying to get you to leave where you are and seemingly go and do something seemingly better.
Or if he is trying to get you to throw in the towel. . . Just tell him, "I think I'll just stay right here. I'm not getting paid
down here. . . I get paid when I get Home!"