

The Olive Tree

Romans 11:11-24

Introduction

Miguel was a young man who had an addiction to pornography. He was invited by a friend to attend church – and he went forward to pray and seek God’s help with his lust – but the battle still raged. He said of his relationship with Christ that it was one-sided. He had one foot in the world and one foot in the church. He wanted to be close enough to Jesus to reap all the benefits of salvation – but not to have to sacrifice anything on his end – including pornography.

It all came to a head one week when he accepted a friend request from a woman on social media – whom he did not know – and who asked him to skype with her. She recorded the session which involved nudity – and then tried to blackmail Miguel for money. When he refused - she set up a fake Facebook page with his name and picture – uploaded the video of their session – and sent a friend request to all his Facebook friends. “What I thought would be a quick moment of indulgence turned into a traumatizing, life-altering moment within a matter of minutes.”

Miguel: ‘My world began to fall apart. My darkest secret had been exposed on the world’s biggest social media platform. My phone wouldn’t stop – calls – texts – emails. Facebook shut down the fake page but the damage was done. My fiancé broke off our relationship - everything that had happened was my own fault.’

The destructive effects of sin came crashing down on him

That night he pulled out his bible app and spun the screen – as if on cue – the Scripture came up on his screen of Proverbs 7 – the warning against the adulterous woman

He went to church the following Sunday – confessed his sins to God – and began a path of renewal in his relationship with God – for the first time began to experience victory over his sin

He now lectures others on how to overcome the pitfalls of pornography – thru faith in Jesus / confession / small group accountability / Scripture memory / installing filters / porn blockers on his phone

We live in a world with many pitfalls / snares / dangers / temptations

Stories like Miguel’s are not unique

All of humanity is infected with something we call sin

Romans 3:23 - 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'

There is only one remedy for the sinner – that is to turn from our sin unto the Savior – in our brokenness - - - say – ‘God be merciful the sinner’

Look to the Savior which God has sent into the world to redeem sinners

That was the message which the Apostles preached / took out into the world

As that message went out – many Gentiles came to believe in the Savior

Paul would write to the church at Corinth

I Corinthians 6:9-10 - 'Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.'

I Corinthians 6:11 - 'And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.'

When Paul thought of the Corinthian church - - - he noted – there were sinners from all walks of life - - - but Jesus Christ had redeemed them – brought them into the church – saved them out of their sinful lifestyles

On the other hand - - - as the gospel message went to the Jews - - - they tended to react differently

They did not believe they were in need of saving - - - they had the Law / they had the temple / the priesthood / the Scriptures

They looked at the Law and said – ‘we’re good’

And so the Jews – stumbled over the gospel

Romans 9:30-32 - 'What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.'

This section we come to this morning - - - sets up one of the great prophecies of the Apostle Paul about end times events

What does the future hold for Israel / what will happen with Israel when Christ returns?

I. A Temporary Stumble - Romans 11:11-16

The future of Israel and whether they will ever embrace Jesus as their Savior – is on Paul’s mind here

He will tell us that a partial hardening has happened to the nation

For now – Jewish Christians are a slim minority amongst Jews – a remnant until the fullness of the Gentiles be brought in /

I googles this week: ‘what percentage of Jews are Christians in Israel?’

Responses were generally around 1%

It took me to a site called ‘Quora’ – where others had asked a similar question

Ronald Weinger [a Jew?] gave the orthodox Jewish answer

Q: ‘What percentage of Jews in Israel are Christian?’

Ronald Weinger: 'Zero. There is no such thing as a Christian Jew. There are Jews who converted to Christianity, and Jews who think they can follow Jesus and remain Jews, and are recognized as Jews by Jewish law, but by accepting Jesus as their Savior have rejected their Jewish roots and are not recognized as Jews by the majority of the community.

Hedi Weiss: 'The answer is Zero. There is no such thing or person as a "Jewish Christian" . . . There are, however, a handful of Jews in the world unfortunate enough to have been deceived into believing that there can be such a thing. Belief in Jesus by a Jew as anything more than a traveling preacher does not make a Jew "fulfilled" or "complete" but seriously sinning. Deut. 18:20-22.'

That is the partial hardening on display – no interest in Christ whatsoever

In fact – we even detect a hostility towards the Christian faith and the Savior

Paul is telling us that - - - The rejection of Israel by God is not final – a day will come when they as a nation will turn in repentance unto Christ – and receive Him as Savior

But for now – God is working with the Gentiles – drawing them into the church

With the gospel – Paul told us – it was to the Jew first and also to the Greek

We see throughout the book of Acts this progression that played out

Jews rejected the gospel - - - the gospel was then taken unto the Gentiles

MLJ: 'If the Jews *en masse* had believed the gospel at the beginning, it would have taken much longer for the message to be preached to the Gentiles. We have seen how Judaizers insisted on Gentiles being circumcised and it is likely that there would have been lengthy debates before any Gentile was told the good news. But the Jews rejected the message, persecuted those who believed it and so, in effect, drove the gospel out to the Gentiles.'

In Corinth – this had taken place

Acts 18:5-6 - 'But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."

In Antioch – the Jews resisted and blasphemed

Acts 13:46 - 'And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.'

Jesus pointed to this reality on several occasions

Matthew 22:1-14 – parable of the wedding feast

In the parable of the wedding feast – the original invitees are the Jews – but they come up with excuses as to why they cannot come – so the king sends out his messengers to highways and byways –

Israel rejected the invitation – but the Gentiles responded

Paul's point – is that Israel will eventually repent and embrace Christ

The prophecy is spelled out in vv. 25-27

Romans 11:25-27 - 'For I do not want you, brethren to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He

will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'

Romans 11:12 - 'Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!'

Paul is setting us up for this tremendous prophecy of Jewish repentance

William R. Newell: 'If this blessing be so great for the world, with Israel "fallen," how much more, when the time of restoration, and of fulness for Israel come!'

For now – a Jewish Christian is an anomaly / a part of the remnant

Johanna Ruth Dobschiner – was a Jewish teenager who came into contact with a Christian underground network - in Holland during WWII – a group of Christians who wanted to rescue as many Jews from the hands of the Nazi's – they possibly could

They provided her with shelter and hiding in various homes [just a teenager]

She came across a Bible in one of the homes where she was hidden and began reading the gospels – and was fascinated with this Jesus guy she read about!

She asked: 'Why had I never been told about this part of our history? It clearly was a historic event, yet it never had been mentioned during my junior or senior education.'

Johanna Ruth Dobschiner: 'The thing which never ceased to baffle my questioning mind was the strange phenomena that all the people I knew who followed Him [Jesus] were not Jewish at all, and had no apparent connection with Judaism, its religion or tradition - they were Gentiles of all the nations.'

She later said

Johanna Ruth Dobschiner: 'Many of my people condemn a baptized Jew as a traitor, apostate, turning one's back on one's own folk. I determined to show my people that this was the most irresponsible statement anyone could make. In turning to Christ, a Jew becomes complete!'

Some day in the future – the Jewish nation as a whole will turn unto their Messiah and become 'complete'!

II. The Olive Tree - vv. 17-24

You have an olive tree – some branches broken off

The branches broken off are apostate / unbelieving Israel

One of those branches would be Caiaphas – the High Priest – who asked Jesus if He was the Christ – the Son of the blessed One – and Jesus responded affirmatively – Caiaphas tore his robes – declaring blasphemy – and condemned Jesus

Caiaphas is a branch removed – we might say he tore up his invitation

Jesus said this would happen

Matthew 21:43 - 'Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.'

Now – Paul refers to some wild olive branches being grafted into the rich root of the olive tree

These represent the Gentiles [you and I!]

The Gentile believers have been grafted in – to become part of the people of God and to enjoy the covenant blessings given to Israel

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: 'Gentiles are partaking and sharing in Israel's covenantal blessings.'

We aren't the natural branches – because the covenant promises involving salvation were made with Abraham / Isaac / Jacob

Our salvation flows out of promises given to the Jewish patriarchs

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: 'Salvation is of the Jews' – John 4:22

The author of Hebrews refers to the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31

Hebrews 8:7-9 - 'For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant . . .'

Jesus – on the night in which He was betrayed – took the cup and said – 'this is the New Covenant in My blood'

Jesus established that new covenant by which we are saved - - - we are new covenant Christians

Jewish branches removed from the olive tree – are Jews who do not recognize the new covenant being fulfilled in Jesus [they are still clinging to the Law / Moses / circumcision]

C.S. Lewis who married later in life – married Joy Davidman – an American Jewish woman who had converted to the Christian faith largely thru reading the works of C.S. Lewis

He later wrote in the foreword to her book [Smoke on the Mountain]

C.S. Lewis: 'In a sense the converted Jew is the only normal human being in the world. To him, in the first instance, the promises were made, and he has availed himself of them . . . everyone else is, from one point of view, a special case, dealt with under emergency conditions . . . we christened gentiles, are after all the graft, the wild vine, possessing "joys not promised to our birth"; though perhaps we do not think of this so often as we might.'

God did what was unnatural [in saving Gentiles] and will in the future do what is natural [in saving Jews]

Paul calls Gentiles to a position of humility towards the Jews

v. 13 – 'I am speaking to you who are Gentiles . . .'

MLJ: 'Do not get an inflated notion about yourselves. That is the very thing the Jews did and they have been put out because of that.'

The Olive Tree – is the tree of covenantal blessings

The root of the olive tree is Abraham / the Abrahamic covenant

We do not support the root – the root supports us!

God has grafted us onto the promises of blessing made to Abraham

Galatians 3:29 – 'And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.'

What saves us is being brought into the olive tree

MacArthur: 'In the future, Israel will repent of her unbelief and embrace the Messiah. God will at that time gladly graft the believing Jewish people back

into the olive tree of His covenant blessings because it was theirs originally - unlike the wild branches.'

For the Gentiles

Application: Don't boast against the branches

Sproul: 'Because their salvation is entirely by grace, they have no cause for boasting or despising Jewish believers [or unbelievers].'

Paul here seems to caution Gentiles from any forms of **anti-semitism**

In Nazi Germany – anti-semitism exploded in the 1930's

In 1938 – Crystal Nacht – took place in November – which was basically a nationwide anti-Jewish riot – in which vandals set fire to 1400 Jewish synagogues / and destroyed thousands of Jewish owned businesses – arrested thousands of Jewish men and sent them to concentration camps [it was government sponsored]

It begins with an ideology that de-humanizes – and then results in violence

Today – it seems like the most blatant forms of antisemitism come from within the Muslim community

We have seen it develop on several university campuses – such as Columbia / UCLA

Sheikh Ibrahim Mdaires delivered a sermon at a mosque in the Gaza strip 2005 - that was broadcast live to the Arab world – he said:

Sheikh Ibrahim Mdaires: 'Israel is a cancer . . . the Jews are a virus resembling AIDS, from which the entire world suffers . . . We [the muslims] have ruled the world before, and by Allah, the day will come when we will rule the entire world again. The day will come when we will rule America. The day will come when we will rule Britain and the entire world - except the Jews . . . stones and trees will want the Muslim to finish off every Jew.' [What in the World is Going On?, p. 81]

Just a few years later – October 7th – 2023 took place – in which Hamas [based in Gaza] attacked and raped and murdered some 1200 Jewish citizens [kidnapped a number of others]

Al Mohler: 'The intellectual history of anti-semitism bears no good fruit.'

The right response of Gentiles should be one of gratitude and humility [fear]

If the Jews have been temporarily rejected due to their unbelief - - - The Gentiles also can be rejected if they follow their bad example

v. 22 – behold the kindness and severity of God

Conclusion

A few years ago [2017] an Australian diplomat fell from the balcony of a high rise building in New York City and died from his injuries. The details of the event in the news were murky – but apparently, he was playing some kind of ‘trust’ game with his dinner companions.

The Australian was drunk [they were celebrating the fact that Australians just voted that day to legalize gay marriage – the Empire State Bldg in NYC was lit up in the colors of the rainbow b/c of that] – the Australian twirled the other man’s wife on the balcony – and she didn’t like it – the husband told him to cool it. The Australian then tried to make light of the situation – sitting on the railing said – ‘look – I trust you to grab me if I lose my balance’ - - - he then lost his balance and gravity took its course – his trust was misplaced!

And his fall proved to be fatal

Israel has stumbled – they have fallen – but they have not hit the pavement! Their fall as a nation is not total nor permanent

The day will come

Zechariah 12:10 - 'And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.'

God will bring them in again – when they turn from their own works – and put their trust in Jesus Christ – the Savior who gave His life on the cross for their sins

They will become branches once again in the olive tree

You and I are branches today [if we know the Savior] – You can be brought into the Olive Tree – by placing your faith in Jesus this morning

‘I believe Jesus’ blood was shed for me’