

“Trees of Righteousness and Secret of Their Strength”

The Present Truth – October 26, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

What a wonderful thing a tree is! Look at it closely; study it carefully. Heaven-sent messages unfold with its opening buds, flutter on its rustling leaves, wave from its swaying branches, and cling to its spreading roots. And if we but pause to listen, from every part of it may be heard the still small voice of the great Creator whispering words of love and instruction, of warning and comfort.

Look at that old familiar friend! For years and years it has guarded the entrance to our home. We have climbed its rugged sides, swung in its branches, rested in its shade, eaten of its fruit, and sought its shelter in the storm.

How often we have seen it bent to the ground and twisted in every limb by the mighty storm-winds. And yet it has straightened up as soon as the storm was passed, and has seemed to grow stronger every day.

The heat and droughts of summer have never affected it. When the grass and flowers were drooping and dying for want of rain, the old tree stood there as bright and green as ever.

Every spring it has put on a new green dress, and adorned itself with fragrant blossoms; every autumn it has rained upon us the most delicious fruit.

What is the secret of its great age and strength, and of its ever-green leaves and never-failing fruit?

Look down at its roots. Uncover them and follow them throughout their endless twistings and turnings, and you will discover the secret of the old tree's strength.

Great and gnarly, underground branches it has spread out on every side, which strike deep into the ground and throw out multitudes of tough, wiry rootlets that twist themselves round the very rocks.

But look again. The old tree is not content to find merely a solid resting-place, it seeks for life and nourishment as well. Down, down, and then farther and farther to the right it has sent out a great strong root. Where does it go? Follow it and you will see. Down under the cellar floor, tearing up the cellar floor, and out at the other side of the house goes that wonderful root, until you find it quenching its thirst at the family well, or at the little stream that flows through the garden!

Ah, no wonder the old tree stands so fresh and green through the heat of summer; it has moisture and nourishment of which we little dreamed! No wonder it stands unmoved through the storms and tempests; its roots are clinging fast to the solid rocks beneath!

Now listen to the heavenly message, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith.” Col. 2:6, 7. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For He shall be as a tree

planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17:7, 8. "Being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17), and "God is love" (1 John 4:8), "the root of the righteous shall not be moved" (Prov. 12:3).

There is the secret of the strength and never-failing fruit of the righteous man. He is rooted and grounded in Christ the solid Rock, and yet the living, life-giving Rock. There is the source of all his power to resist the storms of trouble and sorrow, to withstand all the fiery heat of temptations. From Him he draws all his nourishment, and satisfies all his thirst. Christ dwells in his heart by faith, and he is strengthened with all might "by His Spirit in the inner man." His branches bring forth holy fruits because he has sent his roots down deep in Divine love; "if the root be holy, so are the branches." His fruits never fail, for Christ, in whom he is rooted, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and daily gives him just the nourishment that he needs.

But the wicked are not so; "their root shall be as rottenness" (Isa. 5:24), "the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more" (Prov. 10:25).

Oh, shall we not learn, before it is too late, the lesson that God would have us learn from the trees? In what kind of soil are we sending down the strong rootlets of our affections? In the barren soil of this earthly wilderness, or in the rich, nourishing soil of heaven? Are we sending out our roots to broken and empty cisterns thinking to quench our thirst? or to the cool, crystal waters of the never-failing Fountain of Life. Do the rough winds of persecution and tempests of sorrow cause us to strike our roots still deeper and twine them still closer round the Rock of Ages? If not, can we hope to stand unmoved in the great whirlwind that is just before us? Can we hope to be found standing in our place and bearing good fruit when the Master cometh?

"A Lesson from the Trees"

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"We should bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. 7:4.

As we sit down to rest in the shade of a grand old apple tree and look up at the strong branches bending neath their load of rosy apples, we ask, "Lord, what lesson would you have us learn from this fruit tree? Help us to understand." Suppose we begin to study and think about it, and recall what He has said about fruit trees in His holy word, and see if He will not make us understand.

We know that this is a good fruit tree because it has such good fruit; and we know that that one over yonder is a bad tree because it has such little, hard, bitter fruit. It is just as Jesus said, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit"; and, "by their fruits ye shall know them." We wonder why that bad tree does not bring forth

good fruit like this good tree. And then we remember that it cannot because it is all bad inside; of course nothing good can come out unless something good is in it. And we read this also in our Bible. It says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." We turn on a little farther, and read the strange words; "A good man bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man bringeth forth that which is evil." What! does God mean that men are like fruit trees, and that bad men are like bad fruit trees, and good men are like good fruit trees? Yes, that is just what He means, for read Rom. 7:4. It says that "We should bring forth fruit unto God." Ah, that is the lesson, then, that He wants us to learn from this good fruit tree: We should bear good fruit for Jesus.

But what kind of fruit can He mean for us to bear? The Bible says that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are the kinds of fruit that Jesus loves best, and that He wants us each to bear. He says that if we bear these kinds of fruit we shall be called His "trees of righteousness," because we do only those things that are right. Are you not glad that you may be a good fruit tree for Jesus, and bring forth loving looks and words, and kind gentle actions to please Him?

But there is one thing that you must never forget. You cannot bear these fruits unless you have the Spirit of Jesus in you, for it says that these are the fruits of His Spirit. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Do you know why? It is because without His Spirit in you, you are all bad inside and full of naughty thoughts and feelings, so that no good fruit can come forth a bit more than it can from a dead tree. But if you ask Jesus to fill your heart with His sweet, gentle Spirit, He will do it. Then your thoughts and feelings will be pure; then you can bear good fruit, for it changes you from a bad tree into a good tree. You need not wait till you are older, Jesus is willing to take the bad out of your heart now and help you to be His own little fruit tree. Would you let Him do it?

1. Did you ever see an apple tree loaded down with apples?
2. How can you tell whether the tree is good? Matt. 7:20.
3. How can you tell whether the tree is bad?
4. Always what kind of tree bears good fruit? Matt. 7:17.
5. What kind of tree bears bad fruit?
6. Why cannot the bad tree bring forth good fruit?
7. How is a good man like a good fruit tree? Luke 6:45.
8. How is a bad man like a bad fruit tree?
9. What lesson does God want us to learn from the good fruit tree? Rom. 7:4.
10. Then whenever we see a good fruit tree, what should we remember?
11. What kinds of fruits does Jesus love best and want us to bear?
12. What is it to be loving? Joyful? Peaceful? Long-suffering? Gentle? Good?

13. What is it to have faith in God?
14. How are we when we are meek? Temperate?
15. If you can do all these things, what will Jesus call you? Isa. 61:3.
16. Can you bring forth these good fruits alone?
17. Why not?
18. Who only can take away the bad that is in your heart?
19. Then who only can help you to bear good fruit?
20. Is He willing to do it now while you are so young? Matt. 19:14.