

Worker Sermons

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**HOPE!
We can fail but sprout again!
The Stump Theory**

Job 14:7 "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant."

God doesn't gather His people together to whip them but to equip them for His work. This is part of the equipment: "for there is hope." God would like to hold out hope and that is part of the equipment to do God's work. Someone said, "share your courage with others; keep your fears to yourself." And coming together is a sharing. Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things." I thought of good men and women coming together with treasures and all that we are doing these days is sharing our treasures; if we keep them we don't share them.

Some of the things we listen to are not messages prepared in two or three hours or days or weeks. Some of the things shared have a lifetime of struggle behind them and all that it costs to go on in God's Way. It's not a question of just preparing for a meeting. God brings us together that we might share our treasures with one another. In the world, they don't share—they compete. Businessmen compete, inventors and competitors, and they don't share the secret of their success with others in order to have an advantage. But friend, all the secrets of blessing will be shared here, so that others may have the same success.

"For there is hope of a tree..." It talks about a tree being restored. God is just as much a restorer as He ever was a Creator. He created the heavens and earth and all the things therein, but He restores it every day. Seed time and harvest are a time of restoring. God brings us together to restore us. "He restoreth my soul." He restores our vision and our hope. This is a time of restoring as we are met together.

I thought of a tree cut down. It will sprout again. Even the root grows old in the earth, time passes, years pass; but at the scent of water it will sprout again.

I think of God's truth being like the root that's old in the earth and the tree like the fruit in different generations. There would have been times when God has cut down the tree, but God has not cut off His people. We might feel God has cut us down, but we have never felt cut off from His mercy. During the captivity the tree had been cut down. Later on they found the book of the Law and they realized what they had missed. The root was in the ground although the tree had been cut down. We are very thankful for this. There may have been times in the earth when there was no tree or fruit, but we would like to believe there was always a root of truth in the earth; and in God's time and place that that has sprung up. This convention is evidence that in our day this tree has sprouted. The very fact that we are in God's Way and mercy shows that in our generation this old root of truth has sprouted and is spreading through the earth. We are thankful for this.

There were times when God cut down people, also, but not cut off. Nebuchadnezzar was one. "Hew down the tree....nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth," etc. The tree was cut down; he was cut down as a king. His understanding left Him, but he sprouted again. Man will look at the fallen tree, but God will look at the stump that is left. Man looks at what is lost, but God looks at what is left. We can lose and not be lost; we can fail and not be a failure. Peter failed, but his life was not a failure it was a success. We wouldn't like to measure our life by our failures. We can fail, and we must fail; but there is one way in which we should never fail; and that's never fail to try again. If we do, that's the last, final failure.

We wouldn't like to be taken up with the fallen tree that will never stand again. Faith, hope, and love remain. After storms and battles lost, what is left? If there is a stump of faith, hope and love, it will sprout again. There will be a new testimony of hope in our hearts.

That tree will never stand again, but we can have new belief. We have a Spanish proverb: "After a fallen tree, everyone takes fire wood." That's true. Cut up the one that's fallen. God looks on what is left.

We wouldn't like to look on that which is past. Paul wrote of that. The past cannot be recovered, but it can be covered in the blood of Jesus. There is no way of putting the past right. The only way is to have it covered in the blood of Jesus. Sometimes there is an accusing finger from the past, some failure; and the Accuser, the devil, will accuse us of something God has forgiven and forgotten. Like our sister said this morning. "She feels guilty about her children." We wouldn't like to dwell on the fallen tree. She still has her Children. **God would like to restore what is left. We should not be so much taken up with the past.**

There is the story of the little boy who behaved badly. His father said, "If you continue to act like this I'll drive a nail in the door facing every time you misbehave." He thought, "That's not so bad." After awhile, nails covered one side of the doorway. He said, "Dad, did I do all that? That makes me feel bad. People see that and you tell them all those are my sins. Dad, if you will pull them out, I'll try to do better." Afterwards, he said, "Dad, the nails are gone but the holes are still there." The sin is forgiven, but the memory is still there. The memory is in your mind and my mind, but it's not in the mind of God. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

But there is something about the past that will accuse us. We think of Zacchaeus. His past was accusing him. Paul said, "I am the least of the apostles...I should not be in the work of God at all because I persecuted the church of God." His past was fighting him..."but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind," etc. That's one of the greatest battles, just to believe that God has forgiven us and not be taken up with the fallen tree, the past. Paul was taken up with the thought of persecuting the church. The nail had been taken out, but the hole was still there. We cannot blot out the memory. In eternity it's not what is in our memory, but what is in the memory of God: and God is merciful.

Some are restored in their place, and others are restored to their place. Some lose their place, and God would like to restore them to their place. The coin and the sheep were restored to their place. The coin was not false; the sheep was not sick; it was lost. And the father of the prodigal might have looked on his son and said, "My son is not bad; he has a good heart. Bad habits might have taken him away from home but a good heart will bring him home again." We have seen it in the past. That people who had been in God's Way and were not now, that that good heart will bring them back again. And the father was watching for him. He stood there. "He'll come back; I know him, he has bad habits but he has a good heart, and some day that honesty in his heart will bring him home." He left the door and his arms open to receive him again. He didn't say, "Where is the money? Why do you look like that?" But no, the root is still there: "We will be kind and merciful to him. Maybe he'll come back."

"The rest will sprout at the scent of water." Showing mercy and kindness is the least you can do. The best we can do is be kind to people. Kindness could be the scent of water that will make that root sprout again. The prodigal didn't come home to punishment, because sin and disobedience will punish. People don't come to God's kingdom nor to convention to be punished; they come to be forgiven.

One man in Scotland gave his testimony. He has twin sons in the work. "When I came here I didn't know if I would be punished or not. I took a beating all day yesterday and I come back for more today." There's more blessing than beating. There's more forgiveness than there is punishment. When the prodigal came back home, he came back and there was a "scent of water."

I would like to mention others who were cut down. Adam was cut down, because of disobedience; but he came back again, and Eve still became "the mother of all living." They were still in touch with God, but they lost their place in the garden and lost their confidence. "... now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever." They lost their place there but didn't lose every thing: there was a stump left. God drove them out of the garden and put a flaming sword there. God closed the door to temptation. It's good to close the door to temptation and open it to fellowship. There was a confidence lost: "I can't trust them as much as before."

One time I sent some letters to be mailed in another letter to a family. This family read their letter and kept it. After a month she read it and found the other letters to be mailed. "We have let Willie down, we didn't mail his letters." She asked me a question later, "We let you down by not mailing your letters when you sent them; you will never trust us again." And that is exactly what I was thinking, but she said, "Forgive me and trust me again." That touched my heart. I sent some more letters, and they never did that again. How often we could say that to the Lord. God had lost a trust in them, but He gave them another chance. There was still a hope left. They were not cut off.

God spoke to Adam and told him about the tree and Adam must have told Eve. "Now, remember, we are not to touch it. There is no one else I trust more than you." She might have said, "I believe you, too." It says, "Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The serpent came to her with, "Hath God said it?" "Yes." She knew they must not touch the tree: and the devil contradicted and said, "Ye shall not surely die."

But it doesn't mean that. We don't have to fulfill the scriptures. Don't worry. God is merciful and kind. God would not send anyone to a lost eternity. That was the deception of the devil. She said, "The devil beguiled me." Who was to blame? They were both to the blame.

She took it for herself. "It's wrong, but it's for myself." How is it the wrong things are nice. All the nice things are either illegal or fattening. She took it and she handed it to him. Adam knew it was wrong but thought, "I will do it anyway and I know we'll die." What did God say? Because you harkened unto the voice of thy wife. It might have been all right, but he harkened unto her when she was not under the control of God. She was not in touch with God.

Did you ever hear the arithmetic of matrimony? It's the "addition of responsibility, multiplication of expenses, subtraction of liberty and it's a division of opinion." Adam had one opinion and Eve ame (sic) and he had to divide the opinion with her, so he had only a half of an opinion then. One man said, "It's well seen that Willie Pollock doesn't know much about married life. You tell him that there is only one opinion and that's hers." I believe in the homes of God's people, they share the opinion. I don't know about married life, but we know about the marriage strife.

God went into the Garden and He was going to investigate. They were hiding because of disobedience. A child can lose marks at school, but not lose the exam. A boxer can lose a battle and not lose the fight. They lost points with God but didn't lose salvation. They lost marks or points but didn't lose everything. There was hope and faith left and that mistake was never repeated. Adam said, "I was afraid" when he heard God's voice in the Garden. In the Spanish, it says, "Who taught you?" for "Who told you you were naked?" Their first teacher was God. Their second teacher was the serpent. If we listen to the second voice it will tell in our behavior.

We need to be very careful about those who teach us. "What have you eaten?" Our desires will affect us. We can't feed on wrong things and not show this in our talk, spirit, and walk. If we feed on another doctrine or read books that are not for God's people, it will show in our spirit. "Spirit of God my teacher be, showing the things of God to me." He said, "The woman gave me of the tree." God talked with her. She said, "The serpent deceived me." God talked with the serpent and the judgment was placed on him. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." We have gained for more in Christ. Adam lost points with God but he didn't lost (sic) everything.

Lot in Gen. 13, lost points because of his selfishness. He took the best for himself, and lost it afterwards. Abraham was a peacemaker. We have to be peaceable to be a peacemaker. Abraham had the peace of God in his heart. We hear the story of the two goats feeding on the precipice. Goat sense is the sense to have. The small goat lies down and the big one that steps over him and goes on his way. Then the small one gets up and says, "It doesn't matter, I am alive." Abraham laid down and let the younger one go over him. He won peace with God.

Selfishness in the home, or in the church, or even in the work, doesn't mean to say we will lose our salvation but we will lose points with God. God will cut us down and not cut us off if we continue to be selfish. Abram came into everything; even what Lot had chosen. Lot won for a moment and Abraham won in the end. Those who are on the side of victory now, or seem to be, may be the loser in the end. The ones who are laying down, laying down their live, (sic) letting others walk over them, the day will come when they will be on top.

I was thinking of Moses. Ps. 106:32 -33 "They angered him also at the waters of strife...they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips." God told Moses to strike the rock, but he got angry and struck the people with his words. He lost points with God. He didn't lose his salvation, but God told him, "You didn't sanctify me." If we have a wrong spirit we are not sanctifying God: we are letting God down. "You didn't sanctify me that day and because of that you lost ground." He didn't lose his hope; he was still God's servant when he died. He pleaded with God, "Let me go into that Land." Who was more worthy than Moses? God said, "NO." Meekness is submission without resentment. He bowed down to that, "I can't go; God doesn't let me go, but you go."

He lost a great privilege because he got angry and he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." If we get angry and say the wrong things, we are the losers. We can lose points. We can lose reward. It is not a matter of being like anyone else but a matter of being yourself and improving yourself. If someone flies off the handle, they can hang on to the handle. Moses spoke inadvisedly. If we are short-tempered, we could be long-tempered.

God chose him as a worthy prophet to be on the Mount of Transfiguration, as an example to Jesus. He didn't lose everything but he lost a wonderful privilege. This could make us fear.

Judges 16, Samson lost credit. He played with his gift and privileges and he became a plaything in the hands of the enemy and he was cut down. I think he would have had to say when he let down his guard, "Why didn't I take a stand?" The stand we take is the standard we make. When Samson was grinding in the prison house, he could have thought, "Oh, if I had only taken a stand in the home. I lost my strength and gift and sight." The tree was cut down. But, friend, the stump was growing in the prison and he had his hope. Samson was cut down.

And friend, we could play with our liberty and gifts within our home and the ministry. We could play with the ministry instead of making full proof of the ministry. Every servant has a ministry given him by God. He said to the boy holding his hand, "Take me over to the pillars of the house." And he prayed to God and God heard him. "Lord, hear me just this once," and he died. His last prayer was answered. He didn't ask for his sight. That was gone, but he asked for this gift of strength. "Lord, just once more." He died in touch

with God. The stump was left and it was growing again. Samson is mentioned in Heb. 11, and he was mentioned with the others "of whom the world was not worthy." Doesn't that give us hope? Samson died with his same hope and love. It was already springing up inside the prison. He died in touch with God. We wouldn't want to play or look lightly on these things.

Some of the friends in Cuba were arrested in Sunday morning meeting. The man was a clown and his wife was a dancer in a circus. He was the elder of the church and three of those girls who watched them in the circus are now professing and up for the work. But in that home where there was Sunday morning meeting, it was said of one of the girls who offered for the work, "We are going to take away your meetings and your Bibles." One of the girls said, "But you can't take away what God has put into our hearts." Conventions and the meetings have been taken away; but, friend, there's a stump left and they can't take away what was put in their hearts.

Temptation is not a sin; it's just a temptation to sin. Jesus threw up the guard. David and Peter sinned. But there was a stump left and David said to God, "My sin is ever before me." David was perfect except for that, but he still had his salvation; but he lost the joy of his salvation, and he said, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." David had lost his joy but not his salvation, and he said, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." He was looking at the stump. David failed but his life was not a failure. David has loving kindness in his heart now. He said "is there any left in the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God? I would like to show the kindness of God to the house of Saul." There was still some of that left in David. One boy said, "When my mother gives me bread and butter, it is kindness, but when she puts jam on it, it's loving kindness."

I thought of Peter in Luke 22:54. He followed afar off. One wrong step leads to another and one right step leads to another right step. It's easy to fall back and it will lead to denying the Lord. There's no doubt he failed, but his life was a success. He failed, but he never lost sight of Jesus. We may get behind, and we might get a distance away, but friend, we should never lose sight of Jesus or of God or of His people; we might lose touch forever. Jesus looked at Peter. It was not a look of reproof; it was a look of disappointment. Jesus was often disappointed in His disciples, but He never gave them up. There was chance for reconciliation. The tree had fallen and Peter wept bitterly. And the worst of it was: he denied Him before them all, and those 3 days and 3 nights he suffered that agony in his conscience, remembering the words of Jesus, "he who would deny me before men will be denied before my Father which is in heaven."

After the resurrection, Jesus accepted: the tree has fallen "but we would like to find out if there is a little stump left." "Peter, do you love me?" "If there is a root of love in Peter, it will sprout again." He lost his testimony and peace but not everything: there was a stump left...."there is hope." God would like to give us hope today and for us not to dwell so much in the past. The Lord said, "Feed my lambs and feed my sheep." The tree started to sprout again, and 40 days later he was feeding the flock of God. He was a success. May God help us to let the past go and feed what is left of God in our hearts.