

THE SOURCE AND SECRET OF SPIRITUAL BLESSEDNESS
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There is a vast difference between a petrified forest and trees bearing fruit in an orchard! The one is a memorial to an ancient tragedy when life terminated. The other is a reminder that care and nourishment can overcome challenges to existence. The first time I saw a petrified forest I shuddered, for the wood had become stone. It was written of Nabal that when Abigail informed him of David's anger, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (1 Sam. 25:37).

As a contrast, the Psalmist described a devout man as "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Such a tree suggests roots, response, refreshments and rewards. Blessed is the tree (man) whose roots go deep into righteousness; which responds to care; drinks freely from eternal supplies, and fulfills the intention of its owner. Such human trees cannot live in vain, nor cease to exist. They perpetuate themselves in others who emulate their example. The Bible explains the success of all people planted close to God's river of life.

Trees full of sap ... The Suggestive Statement

"The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; Where the birds make their nests; as for the stork, the fir trees are her house" (Ps. 104:16-17). Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote: "The trees uncared for by man are yet so full of sap, we may rest assured that the people of God who by faith live upon the Lord alone, shall be equally well sustained. Planted by grace, and owing all to our heavenly Father's care, we may defy the hurricane, and laugh at the fear of drought, for none that trust in Him shall ever be unwatered." He also wrote: "The transition which the Psalmist makes from men to trees is as if he had said: 'It is not to be wondered at if God so bountifully nourishes men, who are created after His own image, He does not grudge to extend His care even to trees. By the trees of the Lord is meant those which are high and of

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surpassing beauty; for God's blessings are more conspicuous in them. It seems scarcely possible for any juice of the earth to reach so great a height, and yet they renew their foliage every year (John Calvin)." Both quotations are from *The Treasury of David*, pg. 434, published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

It must be remembered this statement refers to "The trees of THE LORD." God was the first either to create or plant trees; there is no ancient reference to men planting forests. Perhaps David had three thoughts in mind when he referred to "trees planted by the rivers of water." (1) Desire. He knew the value of healthy trees; they could provide shade from the sun; homes for the birds; beauty for the landscape, and often, fruit for the hungry. (2) Design. He placed them by rivers that they could be nourished in times of drought. (3) Delight. God desired His world to be beautiful. It could exist without flowers and trees, but their presence indicated God provided everything necessary for the happiness of His people. That He likened men to trees planted by the rivers of water signifies the same things. The Lord desired humans to be sources of blessing to all people, and to make this possible, arranged that spiritual nourishment would always be available. "Trees full of sap" suggests dedicated men, filled with the Holy Spirit, giving to the world what it so urgently needs.

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Clouds full of rain... The Significant Source

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth (Eccl. 11:3). Perhaps, this should be the first text to consider, for "All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above." Without rain a beautiful garden may become a wilderness. Unless moisture falls from the sky, landscapes resemble a desert. It was significant that Solomon said: and if a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (EccI. 11:3). It appeared he was referring to irrefutable laws prevailing in the universe. Clouds filled with rain would inevitably drop moisture, and trees uprooted by a storm would fall either in one direction or another, and therefore would remain motionless. The same fact

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prevails within the spiritual realm. Unless rain fell from heaven, rivers would never be filled with water, and crops could not be harvested. When Elijah's prayers closed the heavens for three and a half years, all rivers in Israel ceased to flow, and water holes dried up. Cattle died; crops were destroyed and people became hungry. Later when the nation repented of sin, Elijah prayed again, and ". . . the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (I Kings 18:45). The greatest skills of man cannot be an effective substitute for God's blessings. When deprived of divine enabling, men become motionless machinery. David realized this fact when he wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2).

A river full of water... The Sufficient Supply

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water. . ." (Ps. 65:9). Evidently the Psalmist believed Jehovah was the Sustainer of the entire earth. He wrote: "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness" (Ps. 65:10-11). It is thought-provoking to discover the Bible has much to say about the river of God. Ezekiel described two rivers which came from beneath the altar. He said: "Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea, which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass . . . everything shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezek. 47:7-9). John wrote: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev.

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22:1-2). David also wrote: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Ps. 46:4). The rivers of God are always full! It is interesting that, having referred to the river of God, the Psalmist then spoke of the streams which would make glad the inhabitants of the city of God. As tributaries supply water to the river, so the river supplies many irrigation ditches.

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This adds importance to other texts which describe the enrichment of those who drink God's living water.

Micah said: "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Loan... ." (3:8). The Amplified Version describes Stephen as being full of grace. "Now Stephen full of grace (divine blessing and favor) worked great wonders and signs (miracles) among the people" (Acts 6:8). Deuteronomy describes Joshua as being "full of the spirit of wisdom." The high priest of Israel was required to have hands "full of sweet incense." His approach to the altar on the day of atonement could be recognized by the perfume of the incense; he was to be holy in the sight of God. Jesus mentioned the fullness of joy which He desired His followers to know. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and your joy might be full" (John 15:11). God's grace is sufficient to meet the needs of His children. There would never be any impoverished believers if the followers of Christ drank freely from God's everlasting supplies.

Floors full of wheat... The Special Success

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors (threshing floors) shall be full of wheat, and the fats (vats) shall overflow with wine (grape juice) and oil" (Joel 2:23-24, Amplified Version). The writings of this prophet predicted future events, but the truth enshrined in his book applied to all ages. When God's people availed themselves of God's provision, the result was assured. Jehovah's unfailing supplies would guarantee harvests of every kind. Joel wrote: "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt won-

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drously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:26-27). David was correct when he said: "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). It has often been claimed that the famous vine at Hampton Court, London, was useless until its roots reached the river Thames. Then, suddenly, it became one of the most fruitful in the world. A similar fact may be claimed concerning superficial Christians. Jesus taught that unless the branches abide in the vine, fruitbearing would be impossible. Unless the trees, or vines, be filled with sap, their natural growth would be hindered. Similarly, it may be said that unless Christians draw continually from the wells of God's salvation (Isa. 12:2-3), productive service will be impossible.

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