

THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

NO. 529

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted.”
Psalm 104:16.

IF Solomon were here this morning, who spoke of all trees, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar that is in Lebanon, he would greatly instruct us in the natural history of the cedar and, at the same time, uttering allegories and proverbs of wisdom, he would give us apples of gold in baskets of silver! But since the Lord Jesus Christ has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” we can dispense with the company of Solomon, for if Christ is present, behold, a greater than Solomon is here! Solomon probably would confine his remarks simply to the physical conformation and botany of the wonderful tree, but our Lord, I trust, will speak to our hearts, this morning, concerning those who are “planted in the courts of the Lord,” and therefore, flourish like cedars. May our communications, this morning, be blessed to us while we talk of those trees of the Lord, those plants of His own right hand planting which grow in the garden of the Lord! I shall have to say some things, this morning, which are not for beginners in the gospel school; I shall have to handle some lofty matters which belong to the most advanced of the Lord’s family, for Lebanon is a high hill, and the ascent is very craggy. The pathway to the summit is not for the feet of babes—it is rather fit for those lion-like men, those men of experience—who, by reason of use, have had their feet made like hind’s feet that they may stand on the high places. Follow me, as I may be led of the Spirit, to climb that arduous pathway! Let us stand, this morning, under the venerable shadow of those ancient cedars which, to this very day, are the Lord’s witnesses, and are, as before, full of sap—the cedars of Lebanon, which the Lord has planted!

There are three things I shall bring before your attention, this morning, in the cedars of Lebanon; first of all, *the absence of all human cultivation*; secondly, *the presence of divine culture*; and thirdly, *the fullness of vital principle*.

You may not see all this at first, but remember that our translation is not exactly correct. You will observe that the word “sap,” is inserted in italics—it is not there in the Hebrew. “The trees of the Lord are full,” or rather, which gives the meaning clearly, “The trees of the Lord are satiated—are satisfied—the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted.”

I. That rendering of the text gives me my first point. We see in yonder venerable trees, crowning the ridge of the Lebanese range, **THE ABSENCE OF ALL HUMAN CULTIVATION**.

1. Note first, that these trees are peculiarly the Lord’s trees, because *they owe their planting entirely to Him*: “The cedars of Lebanon, which *He* has planted.” No diligent hands dug the soil, no careful farmer dropped in the fruitful cone. How those ancient giants of the grove came there, no tongue can tell; it must be left among the mysteries. Perhaps the waters of the tremendous deluge washed up the cones, and laid them safely upon the ledge of rock at the top of the hill, and there, they sprouted and grew. That would be but a guess; we must leave the early planting of those mighty trees among the secrets which belong to God! It is certain that they owe nothing to men, that there is not a tree of Lebanon of which we may not safely say, “This is one of the cedars which *the Lord has planted*.” Beloved, it is also true of every child of God. The Lord uses instrumentality, but the instrument has no real power except as God puts power into it; if we have been converted, we were not converted of ourselves, of the energy of our own free will; we are not self-planted, but God-planted! If we have been turned from Nature’s darkness to the marvelous light of God, it was not through the oratory or eloquence of the minister; if so, our religion would be in vain—it was God whose decree said, “Let the light be,” and light was; it was He who said, “Let that dried branch be planted in My garden,” and planted we were—and grow

we must—and shall, while He supports us! The mysterious finger of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which He had Himself prepared for its reception, and there it sprang up and continued to grow from the tender shoot until it towered aloft as a goodly cedar of mighty girth! Every true heir of heaven, like the cedar, acknowledges the Great Husbandman as his planter.

2. As I look upon those noble trees, I note that *they are not dependant upon man for their watering*. Yonder trees in the plain are fertilized by little canals running at their roots, and therefore, are they green, but these on the top of Lebanon, who shall find a stream for them? Who shall bring the rivers of water to their feet? How shall the gardener empty his bucket that they may drink? No, there they stand on the lofty rock, not moistened by human irrigation, and yet, your heavenly Father supplies them. The clouds, those wandering cisterns of the sky, arrested by their branches, hover round them, and at last pour down in deluges the fructifying rain; or the ledges of the rock retain the streamlets which trickle from Lebanon's snowy peaks, and then, the roots of the cedar drink up the nourishment which they require, but man has nothing to do with it. Man's cultivation withers in the plain below; when autumn comes, the fields are all dry and parched. Man only preserves to himself a little spot of green by perpetually using the processes of irrigation, but these cedars owe not a single drop to the power and energy of man! Well, now, so is it to the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He can say—

*“My trust is in the Lord alone,
My rock and refuge in His throne!
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on His salvation waits!”*

He is independent of man, even in temporal things, because he has learned to trust in his God; he believes the promise—“Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.” And the bread and the water *are* sure to him. In spirituals, though he uses the means, though he loves the pastor after God's own heart, though he loves the pastures where he feeds, and is made to lie down, yet, still he sings, “*The Lord is my shepherd; therefore, I shall not want. He leads me beside the still waters; He makes me to lie down in green pastures.*” On no priest does he rely, on no persuasions of eloquent tongues does he depend, for his full and his continued maintenance, he looks to the Lord his God, and to Him alone! The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain! Every Christian, thus, is a tree of the Lord, in His planting, and in His watering.

3. Furthermore, if your eyes look attentively at yonder cedars, you will see that *no mortal might protects them*. They are planted on a mountain ridge no less than 6,000 feet above the level of the sea; the snow frequently lies upon their branches in enormous masses; they are in the most exposed position conceivable. When the cedars were as yet but young, the browsing goat might have destroyed them; as they grew up, the heavy falls of snow must have completely buried the young trees. Afterward, they were subjected to many dangers. Up there, the lightning is at home; there, the callow tempests try their young wings. Lebanon's towering peaks must be a frequent mark for the thunderbolts of God, and sometimes, when the time has come, the voice of the Lord, that makes the hinds to calve, also rends the cedars of Lebanon, and the hoary prince of the forest bows humbly at the touch of the scepter of his King! These trees owe nothing—for their preservation from storm, wind and tempest—to man! There is no hedge set about them; there are no means used to shore up the limbs as they begin to drop by weight—man does not even keep the goat from them. They are left there unprotected in the pitiless storm and terrible blast, and yet, the veterans survive! The cedars of Lebanon have not all fallen even beneath the insatiable axe of man—still they stand—God's trees, kept and preserved by Him, and by Him alone! It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he does not live in a world of holy and hallowed influence, preserving him from sin; he stands in the most exposed position, on yonder bare rock, where winds of mysterious Satanic influence, and dreadful earthquakes of his own doubts and fears daily try him; where terrific thunderbolts from God's right hand, the thunderbolts of desertion and stern affliction all come against him; he has no shelter, no protection, except this—that the broad wings of the Eternal God always cover the cedars which He Himself has planted! Oh, it is magnificent to think how the Christian bears up! Weak, feeble, less than nothing in himself, yet so mighty that all hell cannot crush him, and the united hosts of the world, the flesh, and the devil, cannot prevail against him! I think I hear the cedars, as the trees of the woods clap their hands, shouting

aloud—“In all these things we are more than conquerors,” as they remember lightning, and snow, and storm; and so with the cedars of the Lord, when tribulation, and trial, and distress come upon them—“We are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.” Brothers and sisters, forget not that our refuge is in the Lord alone!

4. Fourthly, *as to their inspection*—they also preserve a sublime indifference to human gaze. Perhaps for thousands of years, they may not have been looked upon by human eyes at all. Moses desired to see “that goodly land and Lebanon.” David often saw them, and he sang of that handful of corn whose fruit shall shake like Lebanon, but I cannot find that the cedars have become a whit more green now that they are visited by pilgrims, nor, on the other hand, that they lose anything of their verdure because the evil eyes of man may have glanced upon them! Solomon spoke of one who was “excellent as the cedars.” Sacred to God, they stand high up in lonely grandeur, indifferent to mortal judgment. When the virgin snows of Lebanon were untouched by man’s polluted foot, and the Eternal walked in tempest, stepping from crag to crag, or when in the cool eventide, the Unseen One trod their hallowed aisles, these trees were God’s trees, and God’s trees alone, stretching out their broad branches for Him to gaze upon, quite content if at high noon, or in the deep gloom of midnight, the Great Planter in solitary glory looked down upon them! It is just so with the Christian. He stands, like the cedars, in a conspicuous position, but he courts not observation; he is like a city set upon a hill, yet, still consciously he walks *before the Lord* in the land of the living; he owes nothing to the smiles of men, and he cares as little for their frowns! I mean that true believer who has so grown in faith that he no longer leans upon an arm of flesh, but understands how to stand upright; I mean that advanced Christian who has not one foot upon the sea, and the other on the land, but has put both his feet on the rock of ages, and lets earth reel if it will, and bids the storms come, and the winds blow, unmoved, possessing a deep calm within, because *he looks to God!* This is his joy and his only joy, “You, God, see me, my Father who is in heaven knows my needs, *He* looks upon me, and regards me.” Out with the piety which depends upon the public eye! Away, away, away with the religion that needs to be watched, and guarded lest it desert the standard. I am not to have religion like a dog collar, which I may slip off and on, and feel glad to be rid of it; it must be part and parcel of my being! My religion must be a thing which lives in the notice of God, in my closet, and in my secret heart; a religion which I bring into public because I cannot leave it behind. It must not be the Pharisees’ paint and tinsel which he puts on in the public place, and privately laughs at when he gets alone! Ah, my brothers and sisters, we need to be like the cedars, caring only for God, minding little whether we are praised or blamed by any of human shape! If you cannot feel it sufficient honor to be known of Him who sees in secret, you have need to begin to live aright!

5. Nor have we finished here the glorious independence of the cedar. I would I had a tongue to tell it all out, it is a theme for poet or bard. We need a Coleridge or a Milton to sing the majesty of those grand old trees in their solitary glory. Note that *their exultation is all for God* and not for man. When the fig tree yields its figs, it may well say, “Thanks to the cultivator who has taken so much care of me.” When the vine gives up her luscious clusters, she has to thank the vinedresser who has used the pruning knife. When you walk your gardens, all your plants praise you as well as God, because of your care for them. But what say the cedars? Who has planted the cedars, or who has watered them? Who has pruned them—who has hedged them about and kept them in the day of storm? The Lord, even the Lord, alone, has been everything unto the cedars and, therefore, David very sweetly puts it in one of the last Psalms, “Praise you the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars.” The cedars have not a green leaf to magnify man with, nor a single cone with which to make him proud; the cedar’s silent song is, “Let Jehovah, God of Israel, be praised, and when we fall, let our split timbers build a temple to His praise, for unto Him, and unto Him alone we grow.” They fell, you know, many of them, beneath the axe of Hiram, and floated on the sea to Joppa; and then again were carried to Jerusalem; but it was that they might make the holy place, and build the pillars of the temple of God! So, Christians, is it with you! There is nothing in you that can magnify man. If you understand yourselves aright, you give unto the Lord glory and strength, for your only thanks are due to Him. Your praise, your gratitude shall ascend to Him who chose you before ever the earth was; to Him who bought you with His precious blood; to Him who quickens and preserves you by His Spirit; and when you die, this is your hope and joy—that you shall be pillars in the

temple of your God, and go no more out forever! You are the Lord's trees from first to last; if you know yourselves aright, the Author and Finisher of your Faith is your Divine Redeemer!

6. I do not know that there is a cedar upon Lebanon which is not also *independent of man in its expectations*. They never expect to be fenced about and hedged; they never reckon upon being preserved and watered by man. We have many schemes, but I have heard of none for preserving the cedars! Speculations are rife every day, and one would scarcely be astonished by a projected railroad to the moon, but as yet, I have never heard of anyone who has attempted to purchase the cedars of Lebanon, to preserve them, or make them his private property. Arabs and Turks do their best to ruin the whole grove, but yet there they stand, expecting as little from man as they have ever received from him, giving him their shadow, yielding him their fragrance, but getting nothing, and expecting nothing from him in return! That is your example, O Christian! You are to live expecting nothing from man, and you shall never be disappointed; you are to live looking upon the Lord alone, and there again disappointment shall never come; you are to understand that one of God's objectives with you is to knock away every prop from you, to take away every buttress and to make you lean upon Him alone! There is the round world, what bears it up? He hangs the world upon nothing. If you are what you should be, you are just like that earth—you have no visible support—there is nothing upon which you can depend that the carnal eye can see; but yet, as the earth moves not and falls not from her orbit, so you, by the power of faith, shall be maintained and kept just where you are! “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing.” It is a life's work to learn independence of the creature, and almost another life's work to learn dependence upon the Creator! To wean us from the breasts of this world is a long and painful process; to get us clean rid of that walking by sight, which is the disease of man, and to bring us to *walk by faith in the Spirit*, which is the glory of a Christian—this is a work well worthy of a God—and blessed is the man who has this work to a great extent accomplished in himself! I do feel, brothers and sisters, more and more that my soul must wait only upon the Lord, and that my expectation must be from Him alone. You, too, must come here and learn that the Lord will provide, but it is only in the mountain of the Lord that this sweet truth of God can be seen!

II. Now for the next point. The cedars of Lebanon are a GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF DIVINE CARE.

1. First, in *the abundance of their supply*. No river, as I have observed, rolls at their feet; no canals keep their leaf from withering—man uses no labor and employs no skill to irrigate the steeps of Lebanon—and yet, do the cedars need anything? Look at them! Stand under their shadow and see if they need any good thing. The text tells us, that so far from needing, they are saturated—“The trees of the Lord are full.” Man's trees may sometimes be ready to perish for lack of moisture; they may be frostbitten and their shoots may be nipped—but the trees of the Lord are *full*—there is never any need there; there is no need to them who fear Him! Dear friends, those believers who have learned most to live by faith possess the richest part of the land of promise! Other believers live in the land of Egypt, and are often making bricks without straw, but these dwell in the land which flows with milk and honey. They have passed the wilderness, and having believed, they have entered into *rest*. The lot of the truly full-grown believer, who stays himself upon his God alone, is well set forth in the promise, “His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth.” He has his troubles, but faith makes them light; he has his needs, but faith never permits him to call them needs, for they are always supplied before the necessity begins to pinch him! Other men may, with all their watching and wisdom, come to nothing; they may rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, and yet be poor; but they who stay upon God in temporals and spirituals, if heaven should shake, and if the pillars of the earth should be moved, and the sea should be dried up, yet their place of defense shall be munitions of rocks. “Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.” See this on a large scale in the case of our dear brother Muller's institution at Bristol. We often see institutions sending out fresh begging appeals—there is some new claim upon their funds; the Lancashire distress has been given very many contributions from this object and that society. Of course, it is so—these societies usually lean on man, and rest upon an arm of flesh; but our Bristol brother, by prayer and faith, makes known his needs unto God, and when does he lack any good thing? When needs he issue a begging appeal? Verily, I do believe that if all England were in famine, the orphan house at Bristol would have sufficient supplies! Whatever may

happen, the Lord has promised to hear prayer, and He will honor faith—the cedars of Lebanon shall be full if all the trees of the plain are famished! I would to God we could exhibit still more and more of the same principle of faith in the conduct of our college; and in that case, too, I am persuaded that whatever may occur and whatever may happen, as that is *God's* work, it can never lack! My confidence in that matter is in my God. I am glad that so many of the Lord's people are made the instruments to supply the needs of the college, but still, I look far higher. Sometimes, when friends say, "Mention it to the people," I do not like to do it, lest I should lean too much on you. God's own work shall be carried on by God's own means, and I am sure He will send what it requires, and in a way which shall be for the glory of His name! They are happy—I am a witness that they are—brothers and sisters, they are well supplied, who, like the cedars, exhibit divine Care and independence of man.

2. Again, note concerning these cedars that they are not only well supplied, but *they are always green*. Other trees refreshed with rivers, if they have the whole Nile at their roots, must drop their leaves once every year at the command of winter—and then, they stretch out their bare limbs, as if they prayed for the return of spring! The oaks of Bashan languish, the fig tree casts her leaves, the ash and the elm are ashamed, but you, O cedar, you live in perpetual spring! The green lawns of your horizontal branches fail not even in the year of drought; the birds *always* sing in your branches, and the storks make their nests in due season among your boughs. Dear brothers and sisters, it is so with the man who lives upon Christ alone! He has not the changes of other men; he has his trials, but he sings through them. The reason why many of us sink so low in spirit, and hang our harps on the willows, is only this—lack of faith! But if—

*“Our faith is in the Lord alone,
Our rock and refuge is His throne,”*

so that we can say with Habakkuk, “Though the fig tree shall not blossom,” and so on, “yet will I rejoice in the Lord.” Let our faith be vigorous and unstaggering; let us be planted up there where God has put us—on the rocky side of Lebanon—in the midst of all kinds of difficulties and dangers, yet, our leaf shall be always green, and we shall not know when drought comes!

3. Observe *the grandeur and size of these trees*. I have found upon reference to Mr. Thompson's work, *The Laud and the Book*, that several of the trees measure 41 feet in girth, so that they are real giants of the forest! Think of it and admire—never watered by man, never cared for by him—depending upon God, and upon God alone—and yet, they have grown to the height of 100 feet and 40 feet in girth! Ah, and what magnificent Christians those are who come to rest upon God alone! You think, perhaps, that they, having so little supply from second causes, would be feeble! But, dear brothers and sisters, it is often that supply from beneath which makes us feeble; I believe it is our riches which make us poor, and our strength which makes us weak, for when I am weak, then am I strong; when I am brought down to feel that all the creatures put together could not help me the turn of a penny, when I know that all my power and wisdom, and strength is not worth so much as a rusty nail, if I put it altogether and strain it to the utmost, O then it is so blessed to get a grip of God—to strike one's root down to the heart of the rock of ages, and to rest alone on Him! The best Christians, the most splendid specimens of divine husbandry, are those who are most delivered from confidence in the creature! You shall read all biographies and you shall find in proportion as men become little in self, and little in creature love, and creature trust, they become great and mighty in their doings for the Lord!

4. Note next, *the fragrance* of these venerable trees. Hosea speaks of the smell of Lebanon, and we know that cedar wood was among the aromatic substances burned upon the altar of the sanctuary. Travelers tell us that when they stand under the cedars of Lebanon, the smell is most delightful; the fragrant cedar wood perfumes all the air. Now, few of men's trees do that; some of them do; the citron and the orange, and lemon load the air with sweets, but many others, cultivate them as we may, and nurture them with the greatest care, never can or will perfume the air. How sweetly do God's trees sweeten all about them! If your piety comes from God, and if you wait in spirit upon God, and lean only upon Him, there will be about you such a sweet fragrance that you shall be acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus, and acceptable to your brothers and sisters, and even an ungodly world shall perceive that there is in you the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed! No man will yield so delightful a perfume as the man who is

much with Christ. The scented piece of clay declared that it owed its perfume to sleeping with a rose—and if we have learned to rest upon the bosom of the Savior, if we have taught our soul to say, “My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him”—our companionship and confidence in God will yield a sweet fragrance both to our words, to our actions, and to everything to which we set our hands!

5. Attentively think upon *the perpetuity of these cedars*. Do you remember how carnal men said, concerning certain works of faith which we ourselves attempted, “Ah, well, it may be all very well, it will last for a time; it is a sort of spurt of enthusiasm; it will last for a time, and then die out like a candle wick.” Societies that are blessed with patrons, vice-presidents, secretaries, directors, subscribers, and that use flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music—those will get on; there is something to look at there; there is something tangible; but a scheme which lives only upon God?! The business man says, “I do not see it; I look at the pounds, shillings and pence; I have not learned to look at things unseen, I cannot confide in these visionary ideas.” Now, every year somebody has said, “Muller, of Bristol, will come to nothing; Mr. So-and-So has died, that old gentleman who used to give him 2,000 pounds and 3,000 pounds a year. Now, he is dead, now, it will come to an end and cannot keep on.” After his death somebody else was going to die, and that somebody died, but the orphans were still fed and housed! Even at this moment, the men of sight are prophesying evil against that marvel of faith in the same way they might tremble for the cedars and talk thus. Now, here are these cedars of God upon the top of Lebanon, with nobody to take care of them—they will surely be destroyed. What? No society pledged to guarantee their preservation? Why, there will not be one of them left in three weeks! They will be cut down for the sake of their timber, or carried off piecemeal by tourists. Ah, but my dear brothers and sisters, there are some of those cedars that can be reckoned to be at the very least, 3,500 years old, and some of them are doubtless older; and we cannot, of course, except by cutting them down, discover their precise age by counting the rings. But, there they stand, and have stood all those hundreds and thousands of years with no ranger of the forest to look after them—just God Himself to be the husbandman and keeper of them all! Depend upon it Christian, if you rest upon God, your simple faith is a principle which you may use, not only for 10 or 20 years, but all your threescore years and ten! It serves you in your youth to be your joy—it shall serve you in your old age to be your staff; if you could outlive Methuselah, yet still you would find that God would keep the cedars full, and preserve you among them safely even to the end.

6. I conclude this head by noticing that these cedars *are very venerable*. A traveler declares that often as he has stayed beneath their shadow, he has never done so without feeling a solemn awe. Mr. Thompson has slept under their shade on one or two occasions, and as he has looked up and seen the stars, and sometimes climbed up the cedars, and marked how they spread out all their branches horizontally, making a series of green lawns one above another, he says he has never gazed upon them without feeling there was something holy in the spot. The mountain tribes treat them with superstitious reverence, calling them saints, and giving to each a name. They command, for their antiquity and glory, the veneration of man. Scarcely could even the brute pass them, one would think, without looking up with something of respect. It is most evidently so with the Christian who lives wholly upon God! Your common sort of Christians who have very little faith and live by feelings—your ordinary sort of Christians who live half by faith, and half by works—mere professors who have never entered into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, and think all I am talking about to be mere mysticism; these, I say, who do not understand the word “faith” to be so broad that it encompasses the whole of human life, so deep that it penetrates to the depths of the heart, and yet so high that hope cannot desire anything greater than faith can give—those who have not fully learned faith, have no respect from among men, but those who can act upon the supernatural principle of depending upon God, sooner or later will get the respect even of the most careless! The day is coming when these cedars of God shall be honored in the eyes of the most ungodly—in that great day when the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt, then these cedars of God shall have their time of honor, and the whole world shall know them to be plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting! I leave this point. I wish, dear friends that you and I knew more and more what it was to live upon the Lord alone. I believe it is the safest way of life, and I am certain it is

the happiest. Let the cedar's lot be my lot, let me have my God to be my sole stay and my support, and I shall be rich to all the intents of bliss!

III. Now, for the third and last point. Taking the text as it stands, and reading it, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," which, although it is not in the original, is not, after all, violence to it. It is not a literal translation, but still, it is a free translation that does not violate the sense of the Hebrew. Taking our version, I get my third particular, FULLNESS OF LIVING PRINCIPLE.

1. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," of which, I shall notice first, that this is *vitally necessary*. Without sap, the cedar is no tree, it becomes a dead post and nothing more; sap is necessary to make it flourish and exist. Without the life of God in the heart, a man is no Christian; he may attend his church twice every Sunday, or he may go to chapel; he may read his Bible regularly, and have family prayers in his house; he may subscribe his guineas to all sorts of societies; he may be very kind to the poor; he may be one whose outward life and conversation are quite beyond rebuke, and yet, unless he has been born-again and has been made a partaker of the mysterious Spirit of the living God, he is not one of the Lord's trees! Vitality is essential to a Christian. We call not dead ones, sons, and if you have not been quickened, you cannot be children of God. It is not likely that Christ is married to a dead corpse, and if you have not been quickened by divine grace, you are not His bride, nor even a member of His family! The body always ejects dead substances; with great pain and difficulty, a decayed bone is pushed out from the flesh, through an ulcer, perhaps—but out it must come. Even so, there are no dead members of Christ's body—painfully would the body strive to eject such a member. There must be *life*—a vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Spirit. The trees of the Lord are, without exception, full of sap.

2. Next, *essentially mysterious*. I do not understand the sap—I suppose the botanist may. The sap is the blood of the tree, and in the tree there is a circulation very much like the circulation of the blood through our veins and heart. But who understands the circulation of the blood—it is a great mystery—by what force it rises, and by what power it descends again? Who shall tell how that river of life is guided? It is a divine mystery. So is it with the life within us—it is a greater mystery still. You may discover the sea, and understand it, but never the life of God in a Christian! This is God Himself in a Christian, God infused into the Christian's soul as a divine principle. How shall I set this forth? Regeneration is the Holy Spirit coming into a man, and becoming that man's life; and the life in a believer afterward feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ—like sustaining like—divine life being sustained by divine food! Do you know anything about this mystery? "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Everyone who is a tree of the Lord must be full of this essential mystery—"The trees of the Lord are full of sap."

3. Thirdly, it is *radically secret*; note that. Who knows how the roots get their sap? They go searching through the soil with their little roots, looking for that food which is exactly suitable to the constitution of the tree. But how they transmute the mineral into the vegetable, how they suck out the various gasses, or draw out the particles they need, who can tell? Now, our root is Christ, our life is hid in Him. This is the secret of the Lord! The root of the Christian is as secret as the life itself; who can comprehend the mystery of the life within the believer, and the root of that life, that vital union with Christ, that reception of divine grace—no, of his very soul out of the wounds of the Savior—who shall explain this? We can only say this, however divine grace flows there from Jesus, it must be there, and it must come from Christ—for all the trees of the Lord are full of sap.

4. Then, again, it is *permanently active*. In the Christian, the divine life is always active—not in fruit-bearing, but in some operation within. The sap in the cedar never lies still; the sap in common trees is still in the winter, and if you cut a tree in the early spring, as I unfortunately did, then the sap comes streaming down in great white streams from the wound you have made, because the sap has begun to flow. The tree should be cut at some other period of the year—but the cedar always has its sap active; perforate it when you may, a gum begins to exude at all times. So is it with the Christian! His *divine graces* are not all of them active, but the *life* is always active. My hand is not always moving, but *my blood* is. I am not always working for God, but my heart is always living upon God. The essential life of the Christian never dies—never ceases from being in active operation. There is a seed in him which cannot sin, because it is born of God, but which must still go towards holiness, because it comes from God.

I do not understand this permanent activity, but still, I know it is in everyone of you, if you are Christians, for “The trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

5. I shall almost have finished when I notice, in the next place, that it is *externally operative*. A traveler tells us that in the wood, the bark, and even the cones of the cedar, there is an abundance of resin. They are saturated with it so that he says he can scarcely touch one of the cedars of Lebanon without having the turpentine or resin of them upon his hands! That is always the way with a truly healthy Christian—his divine grace is externally manifested. There is the inner life within, it is active, and by-and-by, when it is in a right state, it saturates everything. You talk with the gracious man, he cannot help talking about Christ; you go into his house, you will soon see that a Christian lives there; you notice his actions, and you will see he has been with Jesus! He is so full of sap that the sap must come out. He has so much of the divine life within that the holy oil and divine balsam must flow from him. I am afraid this cannot be said of all of us. It is because we get to be dependent upon man, and not on God, and therefore have little of this sap; but if we are independent of man, and live wholly upon God, we shall be so full of sap that every part of us will betray our piety!

6. And then, let me say lastly, that this sap is *abundantly to be desired*. Oh, when I think what glory a full grown Christian brings to God, what honor the faith of a believer puts upon Jesus, when I think what a knowledge of God and divine things an advanced believer possesses, when I contemplate his joy and peace of mind—I could wish that everyone of you, (though it is well to be hyssops on God’s wall)—could be cedars upon God’s Lebanon! Oh, that we would grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! There is something of the sap in us, let us pray for more. We live upon Christ. If our hearts do not awfully deceive us, you and I can say—

*“On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”*

The Lord knows our hearts and He Himself knows that we can say as Peter did, “Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You.” But oh, is there one among you who is content with himself? I am not—I am ashamed of myself—forgetting the things that are behind, I would press forward to that which is before; not as though I had already obtained, either were already perfect. Ah, brothers and sisters, there is such a height of glorious independence of man, and a confident dependence upon God, and there is such a blessed internal joy and peace, such a divine fullness of sap which we may yet have that I pray none of you rest till you obtain it to the praise and the glory of His grace, who has made you accepted in the Beloved!

Sinner, that which I have been holding up as the strength and beauty of a Christian, must be life to you. Come, every man, and woman, and trust in the Lord, for if you trust in Him, you shall never be confounded! The Lord now add a blessing upon you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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