

# I See Men As Trees, Walking

"You shall  
know them  
by their  
fruit"



Blessed is the man... [who delights] in the law of the Lord. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season," Psalm 1:1-3



**The Berean Lamp**  
For the Body of Christ.

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New  
Testament





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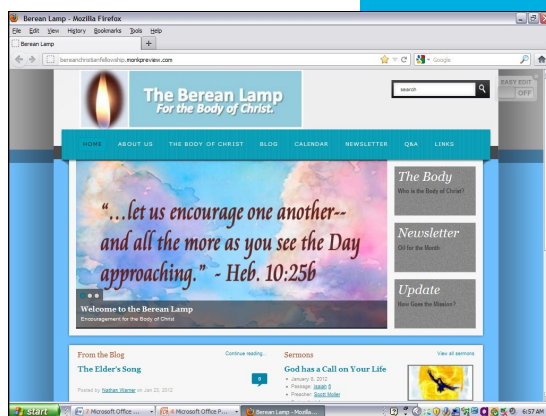
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## **Sowing and Reaping**

By Scott F. Moller

*“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7-8).*

The Word of God teaches this very basic principle: every man sows and every man reaps what he sows. It is taught from the books of Moses and the Proverbs of Solomon to the teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul. Every person sows seeds, and every person reaps the fruit of what they sow. Again and again mankind is warned by God that this principle is at work in their lives. God provides this warning because of His love for us. He knows the destruction that will be reaped by sowing seeds of unrighteousness. He also knows the eternal rewards that await those who sow seeds of righteousness.

This truth is at work in every person's life. And yet, the world does everything in its power to deny the existence of this principle. In part, this is due to the deception of Satan who hates all men and wants to see their destruction. Second, it is because “men loved darkness ... because their deeds were evil” as Jesus taught in John 3:19. The world goes about living by the “if it feels good, do it” attitude, ignoring and denying the obvious consequences of their actions. We are surrounded by sorrow and destroyed lives due to sowing to the sinful nature. Look at all of the unnecessary consequences: broken relationships, divorce, teen pregnancy, abortion, STD's, addictions of all kinds, depression, financial ruin, suicide – just to name a few. Where is the warning? Where are the wise teachers? The world continues denying the root causes of this destruction, never seeming to be able to see the



*“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” – Col 2:4-7*

**“Rooted in Christ” - by Amy Hill**

correlation between the actions and the results.

**Every man sows**

**Every man reaps**

**Every man reaps what he sows**

**Every man reaps more than he sows**

Sadly, many in the Church today do not seem to grasp this principle either. This is, in part, due to ignorance of the Scriptures, due to lack of teaching in the Church, and in some cases, due to willful rebellion. Many in the Church seem to think they can play with fire and not get burned. But the facts tell a different story. In many cases, the Church is experiencing similar results to those listed above. For example, the divorce rate in the church is

almost identical to the divorce rate in society as a whole. Christians need to understand there is danger for them also to sow unto their sinful desires. They need not suffer worldly battle scars. They have freedom in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to sow works of righteousness.

The other side of the coin that is often missed is stated by Solomon in Proverbs 11:18b: *"but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward."* The Scriptures clearly teach that God rewards those who sow unto righteousness. Jesus himself states in Matthew 16:27: *"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."* To be sure, there are many temporal benefits of not sowing to the flesh. These benefits are mostly the avoidance of the negative consequences of sinful choices. They are not usually the health and wealth gospel of temporary benefits that is often preached. No, when the Bible speaks of rewards it most often is referring to the future age to come.

First and foremost is the gift of Salvation which is the reward of eternal life. Of course, this is God's greatest reward because it means eternity with Christ vs. eternal separation and punishment for our sins. But, unfortunately, this is the only reward most Christians ever seek after. They miss the fact that the Bible teaches there are more rewards to be sought after. Paul teaches in Ephesians 6:8: *"you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does"* and Jesus promises in Revelation 22:12: *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."* These rewards that Paul and Jesus are speaking about cannot be salvation because these rewards are for works. Salvation is a gift for faith not a reward for works. In other verses Paul speaks of the prize or crown he is seeking as his reward. But beyond that we are not given much more of a description of these rewards. All we know for certain is that the rewards are promised by God and they are eternal. Sadly, many Christians are not seeking these promised rewards, either because they are unaware of

them or they do not value them. We should not forget Jesus' encouragement in Matthew 6:20: *"store up for yourselves treasures in heaven."* We do not know why God has not revealed more about these rewards. Maybe these rewards are beyond our current understanding or maybe God is simply testing our faith. God has His purposes to not reveal everything to us in this age. But we can be sure that God's rewards are of great worth and should be diligently sought after.

Perhaps some may be discouraged as they better understand the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping. Some may look back at their sinful past and the consequences it has wrought them. Some may think of the time they have wasted seeking after temporary or worldly rewards missing out on the eternal rewards God has to offer. But be encouraged that God is merciful and compassionate. We can start anew with him each day. He is ready and willing to forgive us our sins when we confess them to him. We cannot change the past but we can live for Christ today. Let us be like Paul who said in Philippians 3:13: *"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."* Press on with the time you have and leave the rest in God's hands. He does not disappoint!

### HEALER'S WORDS

*Into the darkness, let your Light show,  
Lord, out of death, let your Life grow,  
Into all emptiness, let your Presence fill,  
Out of the confusion, let your Peace still,  
Into the pain let the Love heal,  
Out of the numbness, let us again feel,  
Out of all the lies, let the Truth shine,  
Into what we lack, give us what is Thine.*

*By Nathan Warner*



## I See Men As Trees Walking

By Nathan Warner

*“[S]ome people brought to [Jesus] a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ And he looked up and said, ‘I see people, but they look like trees, walking.’” (Mark 8:22-24).*

What a beautiful vision this blind man was given of our spiritual nature. He saw in those brief moments between his blindness and his earthly sight, a clear spiritual picture of the people standing around him. Scripture is full of this blind man’s vision.

If our spiritual nature can be described as tree-like, then perhaps other aspects of spiritual horticulture apply. For example, does our spiritual condition spring from seeds? Is there more than one kind of seed it can spring from? Do we have roots? Is fruit produced? Are there different types of fruit that sprout from different seed? The answer from scripture to all of these questions is a resounding yes.

Let’s begin with the Parable of the Sower. *“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” (Luke 8:5-8).*

People are compared to soil in this scripture, who either accept or don’t accept the seed that the sower sows. If they accept the seed, it grows in them and produces fruit. If the spiritual soil is poor it might briefly take root, but cannot be sustained and dies. And if people don’t accept the seed, it does not take root. What is this seed that Jesus refers to? He tells

us plainly after the parable that *“[t]he seed is the word of God.” (Luke 8:11).*

As Bereans, we take a special interest in the Word of God, especially since that Word, quite literally, is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So if the seed is the Word of God, what does the symbolism of the parable mean? Why didn’t the Word of God sprout to mature crops everywhere it fell?



Jesus explains that *“[t]he ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” (Luke*

8:12-15).

One thing to see here is how critically important the root is to the seed. Without the root, the seed can do nothing – it would remain a seed and nothing more. Paul says it best in Romans: “[R]emember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you” (Romans 11:18). Here Paul is reiterating that we do not produce God’s fruit, but God in us produces His fruit. It is His seed, His root, and His fruit.

Jesus is the Root of the seed, which is the Word of God. He nourishes us so that God’s seed will spring up into spiritual health and maturity.

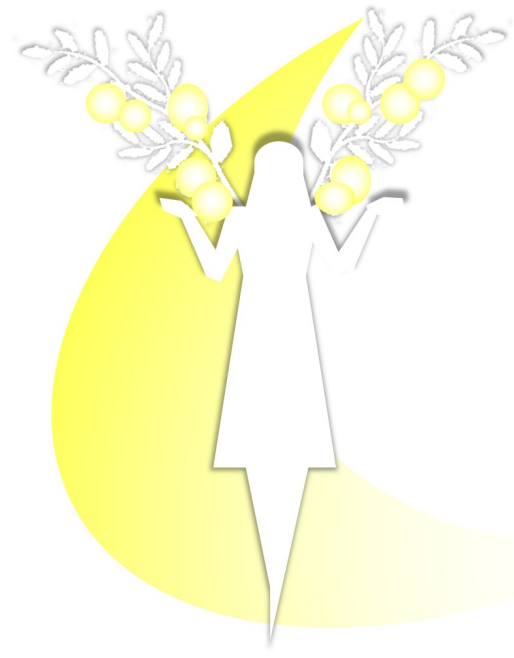
“[I]f the root is holy, so are the branches” (Romans 11:16). The root of the Word of God is Holy, because it is Jesus: “‘I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star’” (Revelation 22:16).

But what about all the sin in the world? Where does that spring from? Is there only one seed? Is the Word of God the only thing being planted in the hearts of men and women? According to the Parable of the Tares, there is other seed being planted and it is not from God: “‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age’” (Matthew 13:37-40).

We see that there is Good Seed and Bad Seed being sown in the world. So how do we recognize these seeds growing up in us and those around us? Jesus clarified in Matthew when He warned about false prophets: “‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit,

*nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits’”* (Matthew 7:15-20). While the seed is hidden in the growing tree, the fruit tells what kind of tree it is.

The Fruit of the Word of God, the Spirit of Truth, is nourishing, healing, and strengthening: “[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). When we see this fruit being produced, we know that God’s seed is growing up in our hearts.



### The Fruit of the Spirit

In Proverbs, we see that “*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise*” (Proverbs 11:30).

Good fruit brings Life. It nourishes and strengthens those around us. Paul contrasts this with the fruit from the bad seed in Ephesians: “*Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them*” (Ephesians 5:8-11). Here, by “unfruitful,” I believe Paul is saying “un-



nourishing.” The works of darkness are not spiritually nutritious, rather, they are poisonous: “[f]or while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (Romans 7:5).

What does this poisonous fruit look like? Paul gives us a picture in Galatians: “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Galatians 5:19-21).



### The unfruitful works of darkness

When we see these things in our own lives or in the lives of others, we are seeing the fruit of the flesh ripening on the vine. It is a warning of the seed that has sprouted in the heart and threatens to poison everything around it. Only the “Husbandman” or “Vinedresser” can weed these seeds out of our hearts. Jesus said clearly that our Heavenly Father tends the seed of His Word and removes the spiritual plants that are unhealthy: “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken*

*to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned*” (John 15:1-6).

We can produce no good fruit unless we abide in the saving grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Salvation is not by works or by our fruits. “*One is justified by faith apart from works...*” (Romans 3:28). Faith comes first and works (or fruit) follows, not for our own benefit, but for the nourishing of others. Jesus makes it clear here that God is constantly tending his seed in us. He prunes believers to encourage more fruit to grow, but He uproots the seed that is not His own: “*Every plant that my Heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up*” (Matthew 15:13).

Today, as throughout history, we see some men and women trying to graft the Word of God into different roots, instead of into Jesus Christ. They preach a distorted gospel and have twisted the Word of God to suit their own selfish purposes. We call this heresy or apostasy and Paul warns against it when he says that “*even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:8). It is clear here that nourishing any other seed in place of the Gospel or springing from any root other than Christ puts us in danger of becoming unfruitful and under the curse of death, bearing its poisonous fruit. What are we cultivating in our lives? What are we growing up into?

Let us encourage one another to root more deeply into Christ and His word. Let us each pray that we will grow into Him more fully. He is the source of our salvation and He alone has said to us: “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of*

God” (Rev 2:7).

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All believers have Life because of Him. We are partakers in His spiritual nature. We have Life because He is Life. We have been rescued from spiritual and physical death as Paul explains in Romans: *“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death”* (Romans 8:2).



### Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

The life we partake of in Him spiritually is not fully realized here on earth in our mortal bodies but will be when He resurrects those who have fallen asleep on the last day and those who will be translated into His presence. On that day we will have Eternal Life with Him, partaking of God's sustaining spiritual nature. On that day, we will see as John saw *“the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were*

*for the healing of the nations”* (Rev 22:1-2).

*“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates”* (Rev 22:14).

### Strength Indeed

*The lack of reverence  
is so very sad.  
I don't feel at home  
in this world gone mad.*

*Irreverence for God  
just tears me apart.  
True life is offered,  
but they harden their heart.*

*But You oh Lord  
endure for a length.  
Let me not forget,  
Your joy is my strength.*

*Help me be long suffering,  
bearing with the weak...  
in lowliness of mind,  
not proud, but meek,*

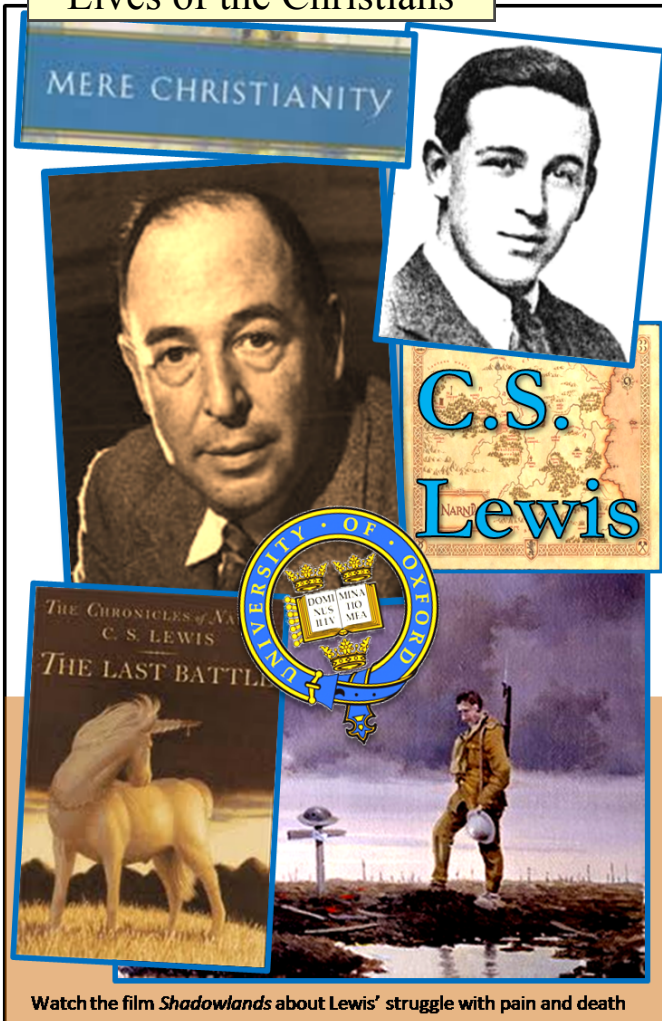
*Through Your sufferings,  
I am a joint heir...  
training for heaven,  
to live with you there.*

*This world will pass,  
and has nothing I need.  
Your grace is sufficient,  
and strength indeed.*

*By Jesse Larsen*



## Lives of the Christians



Watch the film *Shadowlands* about Lewis' struggle with pain and death

*"You must make your choice. Either [Jesus] was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." — C. S. Lewis*

C.S. Lewis is the beloved Christian author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, an allegorical representation of the gospels, as well as being famous as a Christian writer, speaker, and Professor of English at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Born in Ireland in 1898, Lewis turned from his faith at the age of 15 and became an atheist after his mother died. In 1917 he volunteered for the British Army serving as an officer in the trenches of WWI. Lewis learned that there were no atheists in the trenches - when the shells were falling, everyone started to pray. He spent the remainder of the war recovering in the hospital after being severely wounded by friendly fire. Upon returning to England, he taught as a Fellow at Oxford and became a professor at Cambridge. His return to Christianity was slow, but he wasn't born again until he came "kicking, struggling, resentful," to the truth of God's existence and his own sinful nature after long debates with his colleague and friend Professor J.R.R. Tolkien. Lewis went on to become one of the foremost defenders of Christianity in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, proving the Gospel could stand against the ridicule of scholars and academia who had taken great liberties belittling the "foolishness of God" — 1 Cor 1:25).

## The True Vine and the Deadwood

By Steven Hiebert

In this life, we have many choices. One of the most important choices we have to make is whether or not to remain faithful to those who have been faithful and steadfast to us. I have chosen to be faithful. No one has been more faithful to me than Jesus. I remain a Christian because of what Christ did for me on the cross and the Hope of His everlasting life that He has given me.

He alone is faithful: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)*. I recently found in Ezekiel 15 where God asks this question concerning Jerusalem:

*"Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it? Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything! Therefore thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 15:2-6).*

Ezekiel explained that the citizens of Jerusalem had fallen into a life of idolatry, prostitution, and killing their children. Jerusalem's seed became nothing but worthless deadwood

in the forest. They were unfaithful to the tireless faithfulness of God. Because of their deeds, they had become like deadwood from the forest, useful only as fuel for the fire. God intended for Jerusalem's vine to produce fruit for His vineyard that was pleasing in His sight. Instead, they produced bad fruit. I would never want to be part of this deadwood, old "Jerusalem" type of belief or living, which is only useful to burn. This is the bad fruit.

The fruit that God looks for in us is called the Fruit of the Spirit in the Bible (Galatians 5:22). The Apostle Paul explained in the New Testament that among the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace. How much better than the hate, pain, conflict, and confusion that the world and religions of the deadwood "forest" offer.

Following Christ is not that hard of a road compared to the other choices. He Himself said: *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus told us what His yoke was. He said that there was only one true God and that we should love Him above everything else. He said we should love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, we should be married to only one person, and we should love little children. He gave the same status to little children as adults when He said *"let the little children come to me"* (Matthew 19:14).

I understand that Jesus is the true vine and that only through Him can I bear good fruit. I wonder why anyone would want to convert to a belief where people are harmed physically with immorality, told lies, cheated, abused, forced to submit, or threatened with death if they seek the truth. Jesus was crucified on the deadwood of the cross that we all might live and have life more abundantly. He died that I might live. I will continue to remain a Christian, a follower of Christ who is the author and finisher of my faith. I encourage you to choose the Way, the Truth, and the Life that is provided only by the True Vine.

### *I'm Glad It's Jesus*

*When I play escapist  
And can't be seen or heard.  
When I'm always talking  
And there's not a thoughtful word,  
You find me.*

*You pull aside my temple veil  
As the silence lights my thoughts  
And show me what's inside me  
Beyond my plans and plots.*

*If I'm touching, but not feeling  
And I'm open, but I'm lying.  
If I'm crawling, but not walking  
And I'm walking, but not flying,  
You find me.*

*When I'm at the table eating  
But I cannot taste my food.  
When I'm always pushing harder  
But not moving from this mood,  
You find me.*

*You pull aside my curtains  
To a dawn beyond recall.  
You soothe my aching head  
That I've beat against some wall -  
It hurt, but it's better now.*

*When I'm listening but not hearing  
And I'm looking but not seeing.  
When I'm thinking but not knowing  
And I'm breaking but not freeing,  
You find me.  
I'm so glad it's you Jesus.  
Thank you.*

*Nathan Warner*





**“The Trump Shall Sound!”**

By Lynn Warner



**“Cedar”**

By Amy Hill



The righteous shall flourish  
like a palm tree, He shall  
grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
Those who are planted in the  
house of the LORD  
Shall flourish in the courts of  
our God. They shall still  
bear fruit in old age; They  
shall be fresh and flourishing,  
To declare that the LORD is  
upright; He is my rock, and  
there is no unrighteousness in Him.  
Ps. 92:12

## Greenleaf in Drought

By Shelley Tvedt

Believers in America are living in a period of spiritual dryness, but many others in the world have experienced the severe conditions of spiritual drought. Drought is a time of unfruitfulness when the seeds sown do not root and no fruit is produced. Is it possible for Believers to bear the Fruit of the Spirit when all around us is the barren wasteland of the world?

In the 1957 book Green Leaf in Drought, author Isobel Kuhn shares how C.I.M. (China Inland Mission) missionaries Arthur and Wilda Mathews endured persecution in Communist China. The story beautifully illustrates the "Fruit of the Spirit" being cultivated in the lives of God's people during the spiritual drought of difficult and even impossible times.

When Arthur and Wilda found themselves captive behind the "Bamboo Curtain" with their 13 month-old daughter, Lilah, they struggled with questions that cannot be understood by the human heart and mind. Why had God moved them further into China just when they should have moved out? Why did God allow them to be taunted with the promise of release only to have it withdrawn? Why did He allow them to be dependent on the Red Regime for finances knowing the heart of the enemy was to starve them and make them appear foolish? How would they survive for two months on \$37.50? Why did God allow them to live in the deplorable conditions of tremendous heat and stench in summer and coldness and inadequate fuel in winter?

Why did He allow the Mathews to be humiliated by the enemy when Arthur was required to gather leaves, grass, and roots for fuel in the winter, only adding to the humiliation of being forced to make coal balls – coal dust and sheep dung mixed and molded with water. Kuhn explains that for "a gentleman to come in any contact with dirt, let alone manure, was unspeakably degrading in Chinese eyes. The melted snow-water made big cracks

in his hands which were painful and yet he sat there day after day patiently molding them."

These were God's servants. Why wasn't He providing for their needs? Wouldn't God's great care and provision for the Mathews be a better testimony to the Chinese people than this humiliation?



God was cultivating the Mathews family to root deeper in their relationship with Him. Through trials and tribulations, they learned the Joy that comes from yielding to and waiting on God. They learned the truth of Psalm 138:7 – 8: *"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."*

Even little Lilah waited on God at the age of three as she sat "down to millet porridge with nothing on it," but she "dug in vigorously at the same time saying, 'When the Lord Jesus makes the policeman give Daddy some money, then I'll be able to have milk and sugar on my porridge.'" Another evening, when Arthur was



feeling awkward about their meager supper of bread toasting over a fire of coal balls and leaves, Lilah burst out with song...

"In heavenly love abiding,  
No change my heart shall fear;  
And safe is such confiding,  
For nothing changes here.  
The storm may roar without me,  
My heart may low be laid,  
But God is round about me,  
And can I be dismayed?"

What about the Chinese people around them? They were witnesses to the struggles and harshness of the Mathews' lives. Yet, they saw Arthur, Wilda, and Lilah's cheerful smiles and heard their evening "praise and love-service to the Lord" before retiring to bed each evening. They heard them tell the hard-of-hearing milk lady that they didn't have any money to buy milk for their daughter and then the next day they called her to return as they miraculously had the money to buy it.

Unbeknownst to them, God had let His "Feather Curtain" fall on the Mathews, providing just what they needed as only He can do. The people around them could not understand how these missionaries did not starve or freeze to death. They marveled that they remained clothed, illnesses passed, and blessings came. The suffering and trials these missionaries experienced were not only for their own spiritual growth and as a testimony to unbelievers, but also for the benefit of Chinese believers around them as "only eternity will show what those 'green leaves in drought' meant to the Chinese onlookers."

Could it be that God allowed these trials to come upon the Matthews so that the "weak and frightened" Christians around them would be strengthened to hold firmly to God's hand? They witnessed these missionaries produce the "fruit" of faith and trust. They saw how their perseverance and love for God gave them His peace and joy so that they learned meekness, temperance, goodness, and faith as they faced life's difficulties.

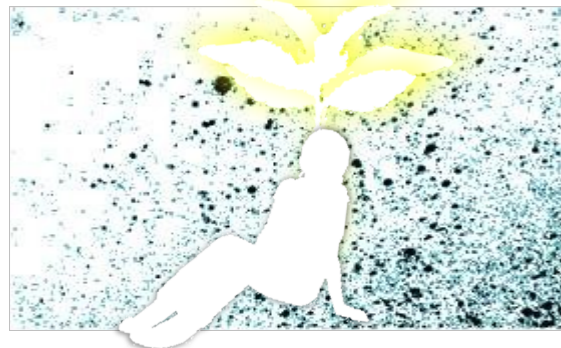
How about us today? Green leaves are still

possible in the greatest droughts of life through the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a yielded believer. Jeremiah says: *"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"* (Jeremiah 17:8). So many of us believers want our lives to be comfortable with the least amount of sacrifice. We do not realize the tremendous blessings reaped unto ourselves and others when we delightfully yield to the will of God, no matter the circumstances or cost of walking with Him.

Satan delights when we surrender to doubts and become unfruitful. Doubts are common when the "[c]loud of battle-dust inevitably dims the over-all picture of the campaign. The individual soldier must just trust the strategy to his commander and obey the orders given to him personally... But when the battle is over and the dust has settled, what has happened and the reason for certain orders will become apparent to even the common soldier." We can find that *"the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not"* (Isaiah 58:11).

Through delightful yielding, it is truly possible to bear fruit even in drought. Take heart. Bear fruit for the Master in plenty and in want.

[Read [Green Leaf in Drought](#) by Isobel Kuhn and be encouraged. All Quotes that are not Scripture are excerpts from the book, [Green Leaf in Drought](#) by Isobel Kuhn.]



## Ordained, Consecrated, Fruitful

By Natalie Madsen

*“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you” (John 15:16).*

What a beautiful thing it is to be appointed by the Lord for His purpose! His Will is a task for us to carry out as ambassadors and representatives of Christ Jesus. He has *chosen* us and *appointed* us to bear fruit – and not just fruit but *lasting* fruit. What a joy it is to know that His plan for us is to bear fruit for His glory! By His promises to never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and by the knowledge that He had prepared *beforehand* what He meant for us to do for His sake (Ephesians 2:10), we can trustingly and obediently follow His intention for our lives, no matter what that purpose may be.

In 2 Timothy, Paul writes, *“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work”* (2 Timothy 2:21). This analogy of being vessels is so simple and yet so powerful. When we think of vessels, a common object that comes to mind is a dish. If we are to bear fruit for the Lord, we need to consecrate ourselves unto the Lord in order that we might bear good fruit. Paul continues in this passage by admonishing us to *“flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart”* (2 Timothy 2:22). As Christ Jesus said, *“Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Matthew 7:16b-19). Therefore, in order for us to bear good fruit from God in us, we must be a good

tree: a cleansed vessel in order to hold God’s Seed and let His work in us shine out even more clearly.



I thought of three characteristics of dishes to help us apply this analogy to ourselves.

First, dishes must be clean to be used. Nobody uses dirty dishes to serve food in; likewise, we cannot bear good fruit if we are defiled vessels. Second Corinthians 7:1 says, *“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* Cleaning requires effort, and diligence in cleansing ourselves as vessels is indispensable. Paul exhorts us to be *“not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit”* (Romans 12:11). Cleaning ourselves is a continual action. Cleaning ourselves is also vital because clean dishes allow you to see what is in them more clearly. If we cleanse ourselves, the fruit that we bear for Christ will reflect Him more visibly; the focus on ourselves will disappear. If we allow overgrowth in filthy sin to cloud our hearts, then the delicate plant from His Seed will be hidden.

Secondly, special dishes are only used for



special purposes. We wouldn't use a beautiful punch bowl to serve leftover soup. Also, we wouldn't use a dog food dish to serve a slice of pecan pie. A dishonorable dish will make what it holds less set-apart. As Paul says, we need to be vessels of gold and silver – vessels of honor – instead of vessels of wood and earthenware – vessels of dishonor (2 Timothy 2:20). We hold something the world can't hold a candle to – God's Light. His Seed of Life and the Fruit He wants us to bear are only worthy of a vessel that is *sanctified, consecrated to the Master!*

Lastly, honorable dishes are not mixed with dishonorable dishes. Just as we don't put delicate dishes in with those more common dishes because of the chance of the special vessels being nicked or broken, we also, as His vessels, are called to be set-apart. If we are in the world, we might be nicked or broken which would hinder us from serving the Lord as He wants. First John 2:15 says, *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

If we plant a special cedar tree next to curling overgrowth, the grasps of the overgrowth will hide the seedling from view. If we plant an apple tree in nutrient-lacking soil, the depleted soil will destroy the healthy tree. In the same way, if we expect to cultivate fruit from God's Seed within us, we must not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the world or rooted in the depleted soil the world provides.

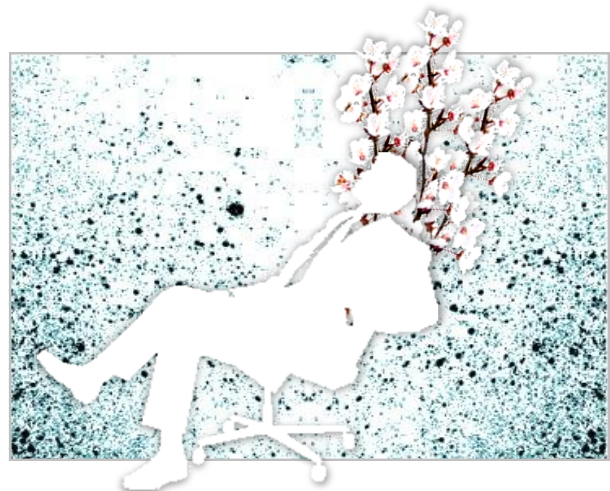
There was a moment in my life where I had one foot planted in the world and one foot resting on God's Word. What sprang from the garden in my heart was confusion, hurt, and rebellion. But when I finally became firmly planted with both my feet on fertile ground, the Seed within me sprang to life. As 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 says, *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just*

*as God said, 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty."*

In order to be able to bear fruit that is lasting, we must consecrate ourselves to the Lord and cleanse ourselves. Let's take the words of Joshua 3:5 to heart: *"Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.'"*

His Seed that grows within us needs to flourish without any restraint by sin in our lives. We need to cleanse ourselves from sin so that we can be *"prepared for every good work"* which God has appointed us to undertake for His glory. How can we bear fruit that lasts if we ignore the intruding sins that overwhelm and strangle the Seed in our garden? We must water our fruit, so that it can spring forth from nutritious, fertile ground, to be used by Him, who is the One *"who causes the growth"* (1 Corinthians 3:7).

*"...So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience...."*



## Friday Was the Day

By Ginny Larsen

*"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children"* (Psalm 103:13-17a).

Alzheimer's is a terrible disease. It takes away a loved one little by little and brings out the frailty of this life. We grieve several deaths of that loved one, as they slowly deteriorate from one stage to another. This is the story of how God worked in my own heart and caused His seed of love to grow as I struggled with my mother-in-law's deteriorating Alzheimer's. I learned first-hand how we truly are but dust and fade away from this life. Yet, we are precious to the Lord and never fade away from His steadfast love.

My mother-in-law's name was Rena. She came to live with us after we discovered her memory was failing and that she was not safe by herself at home anymore. We took care of her the best we could, but after a year of living with us, it soon became evident that she needed 24-hour supervision, which we could not give her. We made arrangements with an assisted-living home that would allow her as much independence as possible yet give her the care she needed. We decided to make the move on a Friday, which gave us about a week to prepare.

We went through so many mixed emotions that week, and Bob continually went back and forth on the decision to place her in the home. Finally, we worked it out with his cousin that she would come and take my mother-in-law for the day while we moved her things into the home. After that, Rena would be brought there

and told it was her new apartment.

Even though we knew in our heads that this was the best way to do it, and we had everyone's support, we felt like criminals betraying her when Friday finally came. I got up in the morning feeling like part of me was missing. I mechanically worked through the day doing only what I had to do. I was preparing myself for my husband's grief, for Rena's confusion and maybe even anger, but I was not at all prepared for my own grief. When it came, it completely took me by surprise, rushing in like a tidal wave to knock me over.



When they brought Rena to the assisted-living home and she saw us there, we told her this was her new home. Everyone tried to make it seem like a great surprise and a very positive thing. She seemed to accept it just fine, but then she turned to me with a look in her eyes that I couldn't describe, but I still have implanted in my memory, and said, "You mean I can't live with you anymore? Why did I have to leave there? I liked it there. Can't I live with you anymore?" Then she turned to my 15-year-old and said, "Ben, are you going to live here with me?"

And that was when we all lost it and had to leave. I was up all that night crying harder than I thought I ever could cry. I was shocked



at my grief. I didn't see it coming. Why was I acting like I had just come home from burying her?

Two days later, I wrote on an Alzheimer's forum, "I haven't been able to go downstairs since Friday, but I have to do my laundry, so I have to go down there. Isn't this crazy?" I had come a long way in my relationship with this woman. When I first met her, I only tolerated her. She didn't want me to marry her son. Then our relationship grew to acceptance and obligation. After a while, I started to see things in her that I hadn't seen before, and I began to grow in my appreciation and respect for her. She was always willing to forget herself and give to anyone who needed anything, whatever she could give.

I called the home the day after we placed her there and asked how she was doing. They said she was singing, doing exercises with them, and making friends. She loved to help by doing dishes, folding laundry, and assisting with anything else that needed to be done. She never asked about us and seemed very happy. I knew this was the most wonderful place I could have found for her and she was getting the best care she could be getting. Rena was doing much better than we were! So why was I acting as if she had died? Why was I going through so much grief? It all felt backwards. After I hung up the phone, I thought I'd be relieved she was getting good care and that the whole thing was over. However, I began facing a whole new set of emotions that I didn't even know were inside of me.

Rena had always loved me and treated me like her own daughter. Very slowly and gently, I began to love her and didn't even realize it. That Friday, it hit me just how much this woman had meant to me in the 23 years that I had known her.

God had revealed to my own heart a seed He had planted and watered and caused to grow. It was His seed of love. It was He Who planted it and He Who caused it to grow, even while I was unaware of it. His own glory was revealed in us and to us as He tenderly cared for Rena in her time of helplessness and our time of sorrow. Life lasts a short time in this

world, but through all of life's frailty, God reveals to us His steadfast love and the promise of eternity.

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26).*

### *The Glory of the Lord*

*The glory of the Lord is everywhere I seek,  
All creation speaks of His might and majesty.  
His wondrous works are seen from the deepest depth  
to the highest mountain peak!*

*As I feel a soft breeze caress my cheek,  
A fuzzy, frisky lamb bounds behind its mother.  
The glory of the Lord is everywhere I seek!*

*I look across the mighty ocean; it could never be  
called meek!  
God's power is displayed in every crashing wave,  
His wondrous works are seen from the deepest depth  
to the highest mountain peak!*

*As I breathe deeply of the fresh spring air, the  
world is bright and alive, not bleak!  
God reveals a hidden patch of dainty woodland  
blossoms.  
The glory of the Lord is everywhere I seek!*

*An eagle flies overhead and I hear a proud screech  
escape his beak.  
The king of the air, he displays the handiwork of his  
Creator in every strong wing beat.  
His wondrous works are seen from the deepest depth  
to the highest mountain peak!*

*God's works shall silence all men so they cannot  
speak.  
Truly creation proves men are without excuse.  
The glory of the Lord is everywhere I seek,  
His wondrous works are seen from the deepest depth  
to the highest mountain peak!*

*Maggie Moller*

## Dare To Trust the Lord

By Jim Poppenhagen

Throughout scripture and in our own lives, God speaks to us in various ways. Sometimes, when He speaks, it is in a *“still small voice,”* as He spoke to Elijah in 1Kings 19:12. Most of us may never hear His audible voice but we know when God is speaking to us. As we pray and ask the Lord to guide us to do the right thing, carrying out His Divine Will, we may feel an urgency to do something, even if it’s against all odds. We may not know exactly what we’re doing or why we’re doing it, but we know the Lord desires it.

One time that this happened to me was in 1967, immediately after I had accepted the position of pastor at a church in Beaver Bay, MN. My wife Marge and I were still living near Virginia, over 115 miles away. We planned to move to the parsonage by the church that month. As we were driving home after accepting the position, we had a very serious car accident. Marge suffered a compound fracture in her right leg and sustained many other injuries. She was confined to a hospital in Virginia for a month. By the time she was released, we had moved to the parsonage in Beaver Bay and had to drive from our new home 115 miles to Virginia once a week for physical therapy. I spent what money we had on a big, eight cylinder Pontiac to replace the car we lost in the accident. The church couldn’t afford to pay us an income, so within a few months our money was finally gone.

Marge had to go to therapy, but we didn’t even have enough money to buy gas and I knew there was almost none in the tank. I checked just to make sure, but as I expected, the tank was nearly empty. Marge needed the therapy, but there was no way to get her to the hospital. I felt so helpless. It was then that I prayed for the Lord’s will in the situation. What were we supposed to do? As I prayed, I felt the Lord speaking to me. He assured me that He would provide for our needs, so we got ready to go on the 230 mile round-trip drive. As I pulled out of the driveway, I wondered

how far we would go before we ended up on the side of the road. *Ten miles max*, I thought.

As we travelled, I really expected to run out of gas at any moment, but I believed that the Lord would provide help for us once we were stuck on the side of the road. Maybe someone driving along would stop and give us a ride. Maybe someone would give us some gas. I didn’t think it mattered how it would happen, I just believed that God would provide for us somehow. So, I kept a steady eye on the gas gauge, waiting for it to be completely empty so God’s provision would arrive and help us. But for some reason, the needle in the gauge never changed. It didn’t fall or rise and we kept on going.



The miles flew by and I began to think we might make it to Two Harbors before we ran out. *I’m sure the Lord has someone there to help us*, I thought, but when we stopped there for a break, no one came by to help us. *Okay*, I thought, *maybe we’re supposed to make it to Duluth*. Sure enough, that empty tank of gas lasted all the way to Duluth. Again, I expected someone to help fill us up there, but no one did. The old car was still running strong so we just kept on driving all the way to Virginia. While Marge had her therapy, I wondered how God was going to provide for us on the way back. We knew a lot of people in Virginia, so I expected to bump into someone we knew who could help us.

When Marge was done with her therapy, we got back into the car, still expecting to meet



someone who would offer to put some gas in the car. No one showed up, but the car was still running good, so we decided to set out for home. The gas gauge hadn't moved a millimeter. It still showed a nearly empty tank, but we just kept on going through Duluth and on through Two Harbors.

Before we knew it, we were pulling back into the driveway at our home in Beaver Bay. We had driven 230 miles without using a single drop of gas! *Wow!* I thought, *I might never have to buy gas again!* I put that thought right out of my head and thanked the Lord for showing us how He provides in marvelous and ever miraculous ways, His wonders to perform.

After what we'd been through in the aftermath of the accident, I could certainly have agreed with the Psalmist that "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,*" and left it at that. However, David goes on to say that "*the Lord delivereth him out of them all*" (Psalm 34:19). This is so true. In our distress, we called out to the Lord. He heard us and spoke to us. God provided for us when there was no other help. Believers don't always escape having to experience afflictions in the world, but ultimately, God delivers us from them all through the Blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and King. Amen.

