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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Thursday Evening, October 31, 1974.

Lesson. Job 14.

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. Job 14. vv. 7-9.

Two words I have to name before you as I begin. First, I well realise it will ^{be} impossible to do justice to the whole of this beautiful passage. I think it is necessary and vital that the whole of the substance should be presented to our view so we may understand the context and the sacred meaning of the holy language. Secondly, the word that is undoubtedly basic, divine doctrine underlying the passage is of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the consequent power of the resurrection which is plenary all the people of God know in varying circumstances, or they will know, in their souls and at last in their bodies.

I think you will appreciate the fact that we have in these wonderful words of Job, a complete anatomy of a tree,-- the root, the stock, buds, tender branches, and boughs. So this is very beautiful because as a metaphor, it sets forth the whole of the work of God in our souls, and the state of the Church of God under the influence and power of divine grace. Before I try to go into it, there are two other characteristics. One is, I feel, obviously solemn. It is a word that sounds drastic: it is 'cut down'. You will admit the language as you know it is very severe for if you have seen a beautiful oak tree and then this is cut down, leaving only the stump it is severe, tragic. So we have the language in a trio of verses: 'cut down', and I trust to expound this from several facets.

At the same time the sacred language is of the very sweetest nature: "There is hope of a tree, - hope." You could not have anything more

wonderful than this. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." You think what it means in the House of God to night, if it can be said of you, of me; "There is hope of a tree," - that we possess a living hope. One of the most beautiful expressions of living hope is in the testimony of the great woman; "It is well." that means a living hope. Can you say to night "It is well."?

Then the other part: what a wonderful word it is to those who pray much and long for others; your dear children, and those who may be laid with special weight on your spirit. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." So I suggest to you that this is an amazing, most precious, kind, beautiful, tender word, as though two extremes meet,- the cutting down, (and we desire it to be so) and the sweet mercy of God to us; "There is hope."- based well and truly on the firm foundation. There is a root, and the very unique language,- possibly the only time just the same type of expression is used in Scripture; "the scent of water." It means the soul is favoured to discern living water, and living water stands for grace, for love divine, holy virtue and unction. The soul can smell, discern it, there is a perfume in these waters, and these fibrous roots smell it. Through the scent of water there will be a bud.

I will try to begin to work out several points of the subject. I suppose we might name the anatomy of a tree; the root, the stock, tender branches large branches. You will see how vital the root is. It is out of sight: no man sees it; it is underground, and the vital part of the religion of a child of God no man sees. No one sees your roots, and we only have root if -and I emphasise if- the Father has planted us in His garden. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." God the Father plants His dear elect in His garden. Job is a wonderful example of a tree and its roots. He came into terrible adversity, and it is sweeping through the earth to day. People who a year ago felt comfortable are beginning ^{to tremble} at what is imminent. A time of great adversity is developing. Job came into it, and it has affected us. I know what adversity is, and it is set over against the day of prosperity. Job said; "But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" The root was there: nothing removed the root. It was as though he was cut down: he had lost his family, his substance, his health

and all below, and he had no one to look to, only God. But the root of the matter was there, though he was as a tree cut down. So clearly this is the basic and important part of the anatomy of a tree.

The root is faith, and the root has two main functions. One is to anchor the tree; to hold it in position. This is a very suitable term, 'anchor'. Living faith anchors your soul, - where? In Christ, in the Atonement of Christ, the sure foundation, in all the work of Christ, the electing love of God, the redeeming work of the Son, and the work of the Spirit, - the Triune God. So the root anchors us in Him. Think of the gales, and how an oak will stand for many hundreds of years. Think of the roots that hold it.

The other function of the root is to draw up moisture; all that is needed for the life of the tree; everything to feed and sustain. That is faith. When you get a little of the heavenly moisture, - grace and love, - and draw it up to your soul, how you rejoice! You are nourished, fed, revived, strengthened.

So, the root and the stock. We shall sing presently in the hymn, of the tree of love. (779) The stock is like the laboratory of a tree, with everything going on inside; the whole process of life in it, and the result will be a tender branch and boughs and buds. If you said; "What is going on in the stock?" take the parable of the sower and the seed. We have read that those on the good ground receive, understand and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. That is living exercise; the work of the Spirit's divine teaching. Moses in his prayer says, "Let thy work appear." There is much going on in a soul of conviction, repentance godly sorrow, searching, and receiving unction from Christ, - "Let it appear." You think of a fruit tree, and the process of life in the trunk of the tree, - the stock. One day you have apples and the various fruits. This is the result of the process going on in your soul. I am not to stay here, but how cognisant I am relative to some in the Sanctuary. So much is going on now in your heart. It is the work of the Spirit of God, and one day it will appear, and there will be precious fruit. For instance, all of you ^{who} have made a public profession of the dear Name of Christ are well aware that for a number of years you had precious things in your

stock. It was the work of God in your heart and your mouth was closed. The day came when the Lord liberated you, brought you into the sweet liberty of the gospel and set you free, and all that had been going on in the stock came out,-- no; not all; a part of it: you wait for part of it. When you gave your testimony you gave a percentage of what was going on: there is a part that remains. Some of you understand this language. You know if the time comes, as I believe it will, when your mouth is opened you will only give a percentage: the other part you will not refer to; it must wait until later and then it will appear.

This is beautifully set forth by the stock; all that is going on deep in the soul till it is time for the tender branch. A bud is wonderful. It is a sad time of Nature when the leaves and everything is falling; the sap going down, but you see the bud formation. When I think of a bud I think of Aaron's rod that budded, and it sets forth the resurrection of Christ. When I look at a bud I feel it is sweet: it is the early formation of the beautiful flower or fruit which God will bring to perfection. It is the beginning of the bursting forth of life. In the whole of Creation one of the sweetest things of hope is the bud formation. You look in your poor soul and say; "Lord, I wonder if I am Thy child; if there is life in me. I feel dead, lifeless, barren, destitute, and I wonder if there is anything apart from formality." In your private reading, prayer, or meditation the Lord drops unction into your spirit and there is a bud at once. It is the same with an exercise. You know, who have a precious promise not yet fulfilled, you do not get the accomplishment of it easily. You go into the trial of faith, and the thing goes into a deep grave, and it seems as though the grave is filled in and sealed and there are precious things in it. You come where Martha was when she said; "Lord, by this time he stinketh." as though she would say; "There is no hope now yet she believed in Christ. "It is past everything now." Do you understand? If you do not now you will. If you have anything precious you will know the stern trial of faith.

Now the bud. The things concerning which you felt you must give up hope there is a bud. The Lord knows this bursting forth of life. It is wonderful: nothing can obstruct it finally; it will break through all. Life will break through concrete. If there is life it will break through

the crust of the world, through rebellious dispositions. Very wonderful is a bud.

And the branches,- "the tender branch thereof will not cease." The very term 'tender branch' to me (I know it has a strictly personal interpretation) but it seems to infer the Church of God with tender grapes; lambs. "the tender branch thereof will not cease."

"Old sheep are moving off each year,
And few lambs in the fold appear." (374)

but 'tender branches! There will still be a bud, grapes, lambs. So it is a sweet word, perhaps prophetic. I hope it will not be all after my time: it will be sad if I do not see it. It seems to be a word concerning the future of this Church; the Churches of God: 'the tender branch thereof will not cease.' and you do not know who they are. It will be such astonishment to you to believe that the Lord loves you. I believe in a certain sense this may be used relative to a soul reaching glory; to be astonished to awake and find themselves there. So the Lord grants amazing astonishment concerning the tender branches. Whoever would have thought that the one who was a persecutor in the early Church would be their own great apostle? The Lord give to you, as He only can, a little sweet feeling concerning the tender branch, that your cup may run over with goodness, mercy, and divine love before you die! What would you feel if you saw one you had prayed for for forty years waiting here to go into the water? You see what I mean. "The tender branch thereof will not cease. This is a sweet word to me.

I will go back and deal with two basic things with me. "There is hope of a tree." Say it softly; "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." Really as I begin this second section I could speak to you like this. There are those souls who pass through so much in the world; such a path of trouble and distress, while 'others again more smoothly go.' Some have such a rough journey, and some are strange characters, yet the Lord loves them, and this word is applicable; "There is hope of a tree,"- notwithstanding all they pass through, or all they are as human beings, 'there is hope of a tree.' There is one thing, if we take up, as we had on Tuesday, disqualifications and compensations, nothing in your life or

heart, or your peculiarities, if the Lord loves you will disqualify you from entering heaven.

"Not all the wanderings of her heart
Can make His love from her depart." (633)

"For there is hope of a tree," Have you got it? does it belong to you? There is hope for this poor sinner. It is marvellous that when the Lord gives you a sweet touch in your own soul, you will pick up others. This is one of the sweet points of discernment with the people of God. See who you pick up. You find your soul goes out and picks up one here and one there, and you say; "Yes, Lord, there is hope of a tree."

"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." Obviously from the whole of the terminology it does not mean the tree is uprooted: the root remains. What have we in life to observe and experience wherein this word is fulfilled,- "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down,"? I see three places with a child of God where the tree is cut down. Surely the first cutting down is where the Lord having quickened a soul to divine life, brings them under the law. They are not cut off,- cut down, yet in their souls is the principle of holiness, which is the principle of life. This is the divine method: we are as a tree that is cut down, and this comprehends all the divine method whereby the spirituality of the law is applied to them; the law apprehends and finds them. It is wonderful how the law of the land finds people who are guilty. When the Lord regenerates His people, the law will find them, apprehend, charge, and convince and condemn them. In this work of the spirituality of the law by the Holy Spirit it is as though the tree is cut down. You will be in a place where you have no hope. What a mercy it is to be cut down! to have the clean, vital, efficacious work of the Holy Ghost! to be cut down as a sinner! How needful it is! Have you been there? Are any there to night? It is not just gliding on in religion: it is solemn, powerful, efficacious. You are stopped, and in a state of self-despair. When people are cut down by the law, and it does not matter what their age, whether they are ten, seventeen, or seventy, they feel they are lost. The soul under the law is in a dreadful state: there is a dreadful feeling of being lost, and all they see in themselves they feel is against them, and proves to them that they are going to the pit. The Lord has specially encouraged me in

this, to see one under the quickening power of the Spirit and the Lord has shown them their sin, and they say: "It all proves I am not a child of God. I have said. It proves you are a child of God.

"Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay." (45)

I have a few sweet things, and this is one of them, to be able to teach, lead and instruct those who have been cut down. But O the sad days and nights! and the devil sets on them and makes it a hundred times worse.

"For there is hope of a tree," and so there is. Here is faith, and here are roots: now the scent of water,-- mercy, grace, divine love. This is water; there is mercy for sinners. This is grace; there is a bud of hope. It is living hope that will never die. Wonderful hope is. You say; "There is a bud; a sweet hope that I am Thy child." Have you this bud to night? If we could look at your soul should we see you have a bud?

I will name two other points. I have spoken of hope; the scent of water Christ; the bud of hope; and the tender branch of the bough. I do not know, it is with God; hidden in God; according to His purpose, but most come into this. You have blows in your life, but you know staggering blows; something that is over and above all else. You have things in your life that seem to cut you down. Obviously if you do not know this you will not understand. I pray God to spare you. For a time and in various ways things seem to be fairly well with you: the day comes when it is as if an axe cuts the tree down. It can happen in a few seconds; as long as it takes to read a telegram, and you are like a tree completely cut down. I have come into the pulpit sometimes with a blow that has dazed me. I feel, Where am I? How much longer can I live? Poor soul, if you are in it Talk about prosperity, expectations here below! It is as if an axe has cut you down. Listen! "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." I want to read to you what Israel said when he thought Joseph had gone. He said; "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces... And all his sons and his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted." This is it. He was clean cut down. "And he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." and you will feel it. Do you know it?. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down," Hope. One day the same dear old

patriarch said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again."

Thirdly, our death will cut us down. We are as trees in the forest marked to fall. They have a mark on them. Presently death will cut us down and it will be my funeral; your funeral, and we shall be laid in the grave: our souls will be in eternity; I hope in bliss. But "there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down," There will be the resurrection of the just. This is the immortal glory of the first resurrection. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again." "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down." We shall all be cut down presently. Think of the glory when the dead in Christ rise first! - the scent of water; the Atonement; the grace, love, mercy of God. The scent of water; Christ once crucified, dead and buried; now risen, ascended, exalted, enthroned! Thanks be to God. Amen.