

**The Unfruitful Fig Tree**  
Luke 13:6-9, January 2, 2011  
Sunday after New Year

Beloved of the Lord.....Perhaps one of our greatest regrets as Christians, is that we are so unfruitful in the Lord's work. In these words of Jesus, about the unfruitful fig tree, we can see ourselves. What fruit have we yielded in 2010? What fruit will we yield in 2011? Sometimes when we look ahead to the future, we fear it will be another tough year, perhaps harder than the last. On top of all this, because we carry the cross of Christ, the Christian life is often extremely tough and difficult. But through it all we must ever remember God is our sure and certain strength. Jesus is all we need. When we are burdened, or when our soul is cast down, the Bible says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee, HE shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." God gives us these burdens only so we by prayer will give our burdens back to the Lord. God always hears and answers our prayers in a gracious, loving, and tender way. His compassions are new every morning. Even when the Lord answers NO, even if it is a repeated NO, by His grace there is a YES behind every NO. YES my dear child, this is for your eternal good. YES my dear child, though you are still weak, I am still strong. YES my dear child, your sins are still all forgiven by My body, by My blood. YES my dear child, I am still with you, and always will be with you, even unto the end of the world. And finally YES my dear child, though you cannot see your fruit, I will help you to bear more, for "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

I. The unfruitful tree which might soon be cut down.  
In the parable of the fig tree, the lord of the vineyard desired fruit of a certain tree. "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Whereas the fig tree should have borne fruit three times a year, it did not bear fruit even once. The reference of Jesus here was to the Jews of the Old Testament. Though the Lord had sent them prophet after prophet who gave the promise of the coming Messiah, as a rule they rejected God's promise and preferred to live in wickedness. They worshipped idols, committed spiritual adultery, showed no mercy to their neighbor and their sacrifices were in vain.

It is important here to understand the audience of Jesus was the Galileans. He wasn't preaching to His disciples here, but in parables He preached to the world which still needed repentance. Any fool here should be able to see that if they don't bear fruit, God will cut them down. But what are the lessons then for us

disciples whom God has turned by the Word from sin to salvation? When the Lord threatens to cut down the tree, He is speaking directly to the sinful flesh of every man, and not our believing spirit. For God does not compel us to good works by threats of hell and damnation, but threats of hell and damnation are the only language the old Adam understands. Thus if anyone is carnally secure, if they are living a life of drunkenness, secret adultery or sinful pleasure, if they are daily hating their neighbor and refusing to forgive, God may at any time cut such down and end their life. Yet because God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, He often does wait another year. The year 2011 is here only because He still desires men to repent and be saved before Judgment Day. To those fools then who mock God's Word saying God will never come, God answers in second Peter three, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." If a man's works are evil, if they've wasted their Time of Grace and continued in sin rather than repented, they will be judged and condemned. This could well be the last year this earth stands, and "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Let no one then who goes by the name Christian be deceived into thinking God's forgiveness of sins allows them to live in sin another year. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The difference between the saved and the damned is this: believers repent of their sins, and put away their sins through Christ and His blood, and daily amend. However, the impenitent do not repent but instead reason, "Since God has forgiven me, and since Jesus loves me and God loves everybody, God knows I can't help but do these things, and He really doesn't care." Continuing in their sin, these make God's forgiveness of sins a license to sin. Yet even to these impenitent sinners, God still patiently waits and hopes. They have one year, which means a limited time. In this period as the dresser of the vineyard digs about the tree and fertilizes it, God through the Word of his servants tries to work repentance and faith in their hearts. In like manner when Jesus spoke to the Jews in general, their one year period was that era of John the

Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. Those who refused to believe were judged in 70 A.D. This was when the Romans leveled Jerusalem to the ground.

II. The source of our fruitfulness. Jerusalem's destruction is a picture and type of Judgment Day. Yet we who believe do not fear this day at all, for we know by faith God through Christ has already judged us and counted us righteous. The Gospel of Jesus Christ declares "Ye are clean through the Word I have spoken unto you." Having all our sins then forgiven, we rejoice that our salvation does not rest upon our fruit at all, but the fruits of Christ, His works, His merits, His salvation being our gift. Thus in the Bible we who have been unfruitful find all comfort that Christ bore rich fruit through His life, death, and resurrection. And while we do daily mourn our unfruitfulness, we can still look forward to a New Year of fruitfulness, because Jesus is the Root whose grace will daily feed and supply us. Jesus said, "I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star." Romans 11:6 likewise says, "If the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches."

Throughout the Bible then through Christ we see the picture of each Christian being a green and fruitful tree. Psalm 52:8 says, "But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." Psalm 1:3 says, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 92:12 says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." By way of God's mercy God likewise promises that He will help us to grow, increase and be fruitful in every good work. Psalm 115:14, "The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children." I Thessalonians 3:12, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you." I Corinthians 3:7 reminds us, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." And I Thessalonians 4:3 says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

III. The good fruit Jesus would have us bear. What are these good works God desires of you, dear Christian? The works Jesus would have you do are nothing more than His Ten Commandments. Love God above all things. Love your neighbor as yourself. Philippians 2 says, "Be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the

things of others." "Let us not love in word only, but in deed and truth." "Honor thy father and thy mother." Ephesians six says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy father and mother." Ephesians 5 says, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Likewise "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." Also, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." "Be ye thankful."

Finally dear brethren, beloved of the Lord and redeemed by His holy precious blood, by His innocent suffering and death, remember also this, you bear fruit for the Lord, by humbly accepting your cross without complaint. "His compassions fail not. *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness....The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD." Whatever burden you are bearing, whatever yoke God has given, it is for the preservation of your faith, the salvation of your soul, and His cross always leads to glory. If you are suffering, know He suffered first for your sake. If you have sorrow, let Jesus be your joy. If you feel forsaken, know that God will never forsake you. "For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." His compassion, His mercies, His tender love toward an entire world of sinners cannot fail when we look to the tree of the cross. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Knowing Jesus hung on the cross for your sake, even died but rose again....He will likewise by this forgiveness lift you up when you are down, strengthen, encourage, help and uphold you through thick and thin, even helping you to be fruitful in every good work. Therefore thank God, even rejoice with happiness of heart, for Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Amen.