

Prologue for Section 1: “You are the Tree”

This first section of *A Different Kind of Tree* is entitled, “You are the Tree.” To know how this book relates its messages for life and living and becoming a Christian to that of the whole tree, we first must look at the structure of a tree and how it works.

A tree grows in two ways. One way is the upward growth at the ends of all the littlest branches; this way of growth is covered in the Prologue for Section 2. The other way of tree growth is outward and inward in the trunks and limbs. This type of growth is in the “cambium,” and as it grows and divides, inward wood cells with tiny tubes for delivery of water and minerals are formed, and outward to form bark for protection. The bark provides protection for awhile and then falls off to be replaced with new bark. The inward growth is called “xylem” and is the main support structure with tiny tubes which form part of the tree’s “plumbing system” to deliver nourishment up from the roots to be delivered all the way to each leaf. The outward growth also has tiny tubes in the tree’s “plumbing system”; this layer is called “phloem” which provides sugars down from the leaves to the rest of the tree.

The structure of the tree starts at the roots. Some trees have wide spreading roots as wide as the canopy is wide; other trees, like conifers, have tap roots which are normally single roots running straight down from the trunk. The roots anchor the tree to resist overturning due to the weight of spreading branches and wind pressure. Up from the roots you come into the trunk which is made up of the outer sapwood where most of the action is (movement of nourishment and byproducts), and the inner heartwood where most of the strength is.

Does it make sense to be compared to a tree? Let’s see if the metaphor stands up. Bark, as noted above, protects for awhile and then is replaced; we learn, grow and try to do better, this protects us from pitfalls and from going the wrong direction. Knowledge of the Bible [bark] helps us to stay orthodox and true to God’s Word, the Logos. Too many are trying to inject a diversity of thought saying there are multiple truths, multiple directions all

going to the same place. Wrong! The cancer of relativism is spreading. It is like tree destroying worms attacking tree after tree. We now have the “Emergent Church” (a fungus wishing to attack our bark) which says no one can really know what the truth is, so everything goes. Wrong! Nothing in all history has withstood hot scholarly dissection more than the Holy Bible. Those seriously trying to find some fault have awakened to find themselves convicted by its truth. You must study the Bible, know what it says, and be discerning.

As in the tree, the twigs grow to become branches. As in any growth, we must start with small things and add nourishment to it. The nourishment we take in makes us who we are; we grow out from our roots. The kind of people we become is borne out of how we are anchored; can the pressures of life be resisted and overcome? Will life’s hard blowing pressures topple a tree with shallow roots? As with a fast growing maple tree, a child growing up too fast will become weak and wreckless; but as with a slower growing tree, such as an oak, the child will be stronger and wiser. A family is made up of its long list of members stemming from the early matriarchs and the patriarchs; elders, even if dead, provide support structure for the family. Just as the elders, for all history, held the clan, the tribe, the family together, so does the heartwood support the tree. What supports you? What is in your heart? More importantly, what feeds your heart?

As the xylem is the main support structure and inward growth of the tree, what is your main support structure? Do you rely on yourself or on others? Do you grow inward with Jesus Christ in your heart? Do you have the Holy Spirit within you guiding your every thought and action? The Bible tells us that to worry is a sin; yet people will tell you, “I can’t help it.” Yes, you can! Is your strength in your ability or God’s? Do not try to limit God. Paul sang songs while chained to a prison wall. You too can set aside all worries if you are a child of God. Jesus told us to not worry (Luke 12:22)...with Jesus as your main support structure, you will grow to become a great tree, grow to be a joint-hire to the Kingdom of God. (James 2:5)