

# Seven Roots of the Righteous Life

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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The passage in the Song of Solomon, the fourth chapter, the last verse, three, 14, 15, and 16, three verses, and one in chapter five. Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices, a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind, and come thou south. Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. I am coming to my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

This passage likens the church to a garden, and the beloved, which is Jesus Christ our Lord, looks down on this garden and cares for it, and enters it, and lovingly goes over what is in it, pomegranates, camphor, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, aloes, chief spices, and says that he has come into his garden and calls the church his sister, his spouse. I have gathered my myrrh and my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.

Now, there is a most attractive picture of the spiritual life, and there is fruit and fragrance and beauty. And as you approach the garden, the fruit is seen, and the fragrance is smelled, and of course the beauty is seen.

Now, we Christians, for the most part, go in greatly for the fruit and the spice and the beauty of the garden. And in Proverbs there is another verse which says, the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. And we, for the most part, go to church, I think, for the same reason that a child climbs into its mother's arms after a long day's play, with many falls and bumps and frights and disappointments. The child wants consolation, and most people go to church for consolation.

In fact, we have now fallen upon times when religion is mostly for consolation. We are now in the grip of the cult of peace, the cult of peace of mind, peace of heart, peace of soul. And we want to relax and have the great God Almighty pat our heads and comfort us. And this has become religion. This, along with one other thing, and that is, if you don't be good, the atom bomb will get you. These are the only two motives that are left in the wide world for religion.

My brethren, there is something better than all this, and it is that there should be a people; they don't have to all belong to one church, but that there should be a people called out by the Lord God and subjected to a spiritual experience given by God, and then should learn to walk in the way of the Truth and the way of the Scriptures until they produce in themselves, whether any atom bomb gets them or not doesn't matter. They that destroy the body aren't important, only they that destroy the soul.

And you can disintegrate a man, a saint of God, with an atom bomb, and he's in heaven with his Lord. And whether communism comes in or doesn't come in isn't important in that man's life because he is instantly with his Lord. And the communists have slain many a Christian and sent them off quickly to be with God, and they cast their bodies aside as an unclean thing, but the soul of the man or woman was immediately with the Lord.

And then the question of consolation and peace, always feeling relaxed and at rest and always enjoying ourselves inwardly. This, I say, has been held up as being quite the goal to be sought in the evil hour in which we live, and we forget that our Lord was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we forget the arrows and spear that went to the heart of Jesus' mother Mary. We forget that every one of the disciples died or the apostles died a martyr's death except John.

We forget that there were 13 million Christians slain in the first two generations. We forget that they languished in prison, they starved, they were thrown over cliffs, they were fed to the lions, they were drowned, sown in sacks and thrown over into the ocean. We forget that most of God's wonderful people in the early days of the Church didn't have peace of mind, they didn't seek it. They knew that a soldier doesn't go to the battlefield to relax, he goes to the battlefield to fight.

And they accepted their position in earth as soldiers in the army of God, fighting along with the Lord Jesus Christ in the terrible war against iniquity and sin. Not the war against people, but the war against sin and iniquity and the devil.

So, there was much distress, many heartaches, many tears, much loss, and many bruises, and many dead. There's something better than being comfortable. The Church of Christ ought to find that out, and the poor, soft, over-swollen Christians of our time ought to find that out. There's something better than being comfortable.

We Protestants have forgotten altogether that there's such a thing as discipline and suffering. We live under an economy that enables us to have plenty. We live under a political system that enables us to believe anything we want or nothing at all and not get into trouble with the law. And the result is we have concocted a religion of sweet wine that we drink and hope that we can walk around in a state of pleasant intoxication.

Now what is the real thing God wants to do for a man? The real thing that God wants to do for an individual and for the Church is to bring in him the fruits of the Spirit—joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

It is in the language of Paul in Ephesians to cause him to be so that he will love everybody and let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from among you with all malice. Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God hath for Christ's sake forgiven you. Be therefore followers of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

To bring out the likeness of Christ in the heart and life of a man—that is the purpose of God. Not to make him happy, though he is likely to be happy. Not to make civilization

safe, though if there are enough of people like that in the world, civilization would have a better chance to exist.

But now here is our difficulty, my brethren. We try to arrive at the fruits of Christianity by a shortcut. Everybody wants to have peace and joy and love and goodness and gentleness and faithfulness, and everybody wants to be able to endure and to sacrifice and to suffer.

Everybody wants to be known as being spiritual, close to God, obedient and walking in the truth. Everybody wants the fruit of the spiritual life. And it's beautiful, and in heaven it will be paramount. Outside of, and next to the beauty of Jesus, will be the beauty of his people revealed.

But here's what I want to get at this morning, that flowers do not grow in thin air. A beautiful, fragrant blossom does not grow in a vacuum. They do not come suddenly down from somewhere and hover over us like a hummingbird. They grow, and they come up out of a root, and the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

And all that beautiful garden that you see there, whose fragrance comes out to welcome you, all roots down into the hard earth. And all has stalks and strong roots, and the flowers grow on top of that. They are a part of it. But you take the roots away and you'll have your flower about one day. Then the sun will scorch it, and it will be gone.

Now what I want to talk about today is the roots of spirituality. We all want the fruit and the blossom and the fragrance and the flower. But we have misunderstood about this, and we think that we get it by some kind of magic instead of by a cultivation. But I want to tell you that every flower has a stalk, and every stalk has a root. And long before there's any flower, there is the careful tending of the stalk and the root.

Now, some of us wonder why we just can't keep our spiritual lives right and why we can't have patience. Some wonder why they can't have the fruits of the Spirit and the flowers of the field in their lives. Because they're trying to get to the fruit and the flower and ignoring the root and the stalk. I want to talk about seven of the roots or stalks of the spiritual life.

Now this will not tell you how to be saved. I want to be very careful here and tell you that this is not a sermon on how to be saved. This assumes that you are already a converted Christian and that the wonder of the new birth has already taken place in your life. If that is not true, then this will not help you much because this is for those who are already Christians.

But while it does not tell you how to be saved, and by deliberate design I do not this morning preach on how you can be saved, but while it does not tell you that, it does tell you what you must do and how you must live being already saved if you are going to have produced in you the beautiful fruits and fragrances of the Holy Ghost.

Now I want to talk to you about some of the roots and I will mention the first one as being the root of regularity in religious habits. All nature testifies of the value of

regularity. The seasons are regular. If the weather is two weeks off, as it is now, people grumble a lot about it.

But in the main, the seasons are regular, and the heavenly bodies are regular, and the very fields are regular, and the birds are regular, and the animals are. There's a regularity about life, a regularity about the rising and setting of the sun, a regularity about the phases of the moon, and that regularity keeps things going.

We forget all about that. We forget that back of the sunshine and the rain and the beauty of the stars at night and the loveliness of the forest and the green of the field and the sound of birdsong. We forget that back of all that is a good, sound, solid undergirding of regularity. God has built it into nature so that it does what it does regularly.

In the Old Testament, if you will read it, you will find that the Old Testament religion was built around a regularity. It said about the old man of God that it was in the order of his course that he went into the temple of God that time, and everything was laid out in order. There was an orderliness about this spiritual life.

And it is of immense value to the Christian life that you should learn to be regular in your prayer life, that you should learn to be regular in your giving, and that you should learn to be regular in your church attendance. But you see, we say, now I believe in Christ, and I've had a spiritual experience, and I have the right doctrine.

And then after that, we all go to pieces and become whimsical and pray according to the impulse and give according to the way we feel like it at the moment, attend church when the weather's good, and do what we do with whimsical irregularity, and then wonder why we do not smell the sweet fragrance of aloes when we approach the church. It's because people have neglected the root and the flowers have died. The root of regularity has been forgotten, and the result is, of course, that when the root is gone, the flowers die shortly afterward.

Now you say, I wanted to get into the spiritual, the Christian faith in order that I might get freed from the necessity of having to do things regularly. Well, you've missed it, my brother, and you might as well close your Bible and walk out, because you're in the wrong church and the wrong pew and the wrong dispensation. God would have his people learn regular holy habits and follow them right along, not to become slaves to them, but to make them slaves to Him.

Now the second root is that of dependability. Let us notice that everything in nature is dependable. You sow corn or plant corn, and you get corn. You do not get wheat or barley. Plant and you get barley. You do not get wheat or corn. Set a hen on hen eggs and you get chickens. You do not get guinea hens. And so, with everything after its kind. Everything is dependable in nature except man.

And even in human society, there is a certain amount of dependability. That car of yours, you've got to depend on that. If you find it fails you a few times, you'll get rid of it. You can't have a machine that you can't depend on when you're hurrying off to work or to church or on a business engagement. You'll have to be able to depend upon it.

You women know that your refrigerator must be dependable, or your food will spoil unknown to you. You'll go out some evening and find you've been gone all day and come back and find everything warm and soggy and spoiled. We have to have dependability in machinery. And we have to have dependability in the monetary system.

Suppose for a minute that in Chicago a dollar was worth a dollar. In Milwaukee it was worth 75 cents; in Detroit they wouldn't take a dollar at all. In St. Louis it was worth 32 cents. And in Seattle you couldn't buy anything with a dollar.

Suppose that every state and city throughout the United States had a whimsical and undependable idea about money so that the currency was not stable. It would throw the whole economy into confusion in no time at all and would help to bring the nation down to the dust. One of the first things to go to pieces when a nation is falling is its economy and the soundness of its currency.

So, in society we have to have it. And so, with the mail, and so with the milkman, and so with the schools. There must be a dependability. You've got to be able to trust somebody.

And the sad thing about it all, my brethren, is that people as a rule are trusted because they get something out of it. The milkman doesn't come around because he's a good, faithful, dependable soul. He comes around because he gets paid for it. The mailman doesn't deliver his mail to you because he's a sweet fellow that hopes you get a postcard from Ann Mabel. He's paid for doing it.

And so, with everybody else and everything else. Your car is dependable not because somebody said, oh, that fellow Ed Johnson, he's such a wonderful fellow, I'll make him a good, dependable car. No, no.

It's dependable because the makers know that if they're to sell two, the first one has to be dependable. And if they're to sell ten, the first two have to be dependable. They know that they depend upon dependability being built into their car.

And it's only at the altar of God that men can be depended upon. It's only in the sanctuary that we can't get but a few people that can be depended upon. The root of dependability is dead in most churches except for a faithful few that you can depend on. And then that faithful few get abused by the unfaithful ones and the undependable ones. The faithful few that can always be depended upon and are always in evidence, they get criticized for wanting to run the show.

Now I want to ask you a question this morning. I want to ask you this, and I don't have any one person in mind, I'm just throwing this out into the anonymity, and asking you this. Think about your life over the last year. This is June 12, 1954; one full year. Now think about your life, your religious life, your church attendance, your giving, your praying, your dependability. Think about it since 1954, the same date.

Now be honest with yourself. Nobody will know anyhow. We all do, but I mean at that moment we won't pay attention. Think now, how dependable have you been? And then ask yourself this question, if everybody in this church had been exactly as dependable as

I am, where would our church be? That's a question that we well ought to ask on our knees with tears and sorrow and pray that God will help us to be dependable. When you have something to do, do it, no matter how simple it is. But you know, in this day of Roy Rogers and drama, nobody wants to be known as dependable.

Oh, they say, a mule is dependable. Dependability, that's for any moron. I want to do something dramatic. I want to do something with a flair to it. I want to do something big and grand.

Well, the chances are you never will, but if you do, it will simply be a flash in the pan, a rainbow without meaning, and will have no final stability. Who wants to be known as a dependable person? Somebody you can count on. If he says he'll be there, he'll be there. If he says he'll do this, you won't have to talk to him five weeks later and say, why didn't you do it? If he makes an appointment, he'll meet it. He's a dependable Christian.

And brethren, remember that sweet flowers are beautiful to look at and very cheerful to smell. But somebody had to be out there on these knees poking around in the dirt long before there was any flower, and fertilizing, and digging up, and going back and doing it again, and then watching the weather and watering when it got too dry, and looking after that root.

And one of the roots is dependability. And you can't have spirituality without dependability any more than you can have a begonia without a begonia stalk, or a lily without the stalk the lily grows on.

And then I mentioned a third root, and that is the root of loyalty. And by this I do not mean loyalty to your denomination, church loyalty. Loyalty to an effete or corrupt church or denomination is not a good thing. I mean identification of myself with a principle, a truth, or a cause, to the point of where I'll sacrifice for it.

A great breakdown in modern times is lack of loyalty. Every church must have a few who are loyal and will die if they must for their loyalties. But everybody talks about that one, so I'll pass on to the fourth one, and that is punctuality.

Isn't it strange, my friends, that the fault that would wreck a business, sink a ship, ruin a railroad, is tolerated at the very altar of God? And in the very Church of Christ that can be carried on carelessly, loosely, which I say would sink a ship, wreck a business, ruin a railroad, or upset an economy, or even if done in our bodies would ruin our health. And yet in the church of God nobody thinks anything about it. The impunctual person wastes time, other people's time.

John Wesley had a date to meet a young fellow at a certain hour, and John was there. Fifteen minutes later he came. John Wesley said with that usual sweet gravity that he always had. He said, young man, you have stolen fifteen minutes of the time God has given me. I can see the young fellow's face red.

But anybody that's impunctual is guilty of deception and falsehood. He says, I'll be there, and if he isn't there, now, of course it's understood if there's a traffic jam or a flat tire or illness or an accident, that's another matter. But we're talking about impunctuality that

has become a habit in the life, and there isn't anybody important enough to justify impunctuality.

If I had a date to talk to President Eisenhower and he stood me up, he'd never get another date with me till he apologized. There's no man on earth important enough to stand me up fifteen minutes or twenty minutes unless there's been an accident, or he's been ill or there's something wrong. That, of course, always is understood in this terrible, unpredictable world. But there is no man important enough to take another man's time. Punctuality is a beautiful thing.

How about you Sunday school teachers? One of the woes of the Sunday school committee, one thing that puts gray hairs in every superintendent's head, he doesn't have any when he starts, he has them when he gets out of office, is how can I get my teachers to be there on time?

Now listen, fellow, you don't fool me at all. An old fellow that's been around as long as I am, I know you're not spiritual if you're not punctual. You have a sacred duty. You have in your hands the teaching of immortal souls. You have characters to mold and souls to win and the work of God to do.

And you're so lacking in self-discipline, so selfish that you'll keep the Sunday school in an uproar because you will not be punctual. And then you lead in prayer like a saint, and we look for the halo. You're fooling nobody but yourself. If you're not punctual, you're not spiritual. You can't have a rose without a rose bush and punctuality is the rose bush on which the rose grows. Not alone on that, but of many other things.

So, let's keep this in mind, my friend. That's why I like to see a church service start right on the head. Not two minutes, three minutes, five minutes late, but right on the head. And everything we do for God should be done with beautiful precision.

Now God understands if we can't, if we can't, God understands, something breaks down, God understands. But the point is, why should we keep God forever having to overlook it when we don't have to be impunctual?

And the fifth is honesty. Just plain downright honesty is a very fragrant flower, but it never yet grew in a vacuum. It never yet came down like a flying saucer and hovered in front of anybody. It is a flower that grows on a stalk, and somebody has to take care of the stalk.

In our testimony, we ought to be perfectly honest, always, never overstate it. And we preachers should never overstate it. An evangelist that will say he preached to 5,000 when there were only 250 or 2,500 there is a liar, and he's certainly as much of a liar as Ananias was.

But we joke about it and say it's evangelistically speaking. Any lie is of the father the Devil, whether it's told in a church service or somewhere else. So, let's learn to be absolutely honest, and we'll be perfectly safe.

God's Word does not need pious lies to support it. Tell the truth, shame the devil. You've heard that old one? Tell the truth and shame the devil. And if you'll tell the truth, there's only be one person embarrassed, and that'll be the devil, because the devil runs his business on lies and half-lies and half-truths.

So be perfectly frank and perfectly honest. Honesty is a good root, and out of it and from it there comes the fine virtues. Faith and love and peace and long-suffering and patience and goodness, these grow on the roots that I have mentioned. A very fragrant root is honesty.

The Quakers had a lot to tell us. We don't go along with them in everything, but you couldn't get a Quaker to lie. One old unbeliever who died of suicide later on, Haldeman Julius, who 25, 30, 35 years ago was flooding this country with every kind of unholy literature, but in his better moments he was capable of some pretty sound critical judgments, and he said this about the Quakers in a little sketch he was writing about religion. He said, then came the Quakers and astonished the Christian world by insisting upon acting like Christians.

That's why the Quakers were considered to be such weird, impossible persons. They acted like Christians. They wouldn't exaggerate, they wouldn't lie, they wouldn't steal, they wouldn't be dishonest, they wouldn't do anything wrong, they wouldn't get down on their knees and flatter a big shot when they knew all the time how little he was.

And of course, they got thrown into jail and kicked around. It was quite a sport in England for quite a long while, kicking Quakers around. Because all the Quakers would do would be to honor God and honor the people who deserved it, call each other by their first name, put away all bombastic titles, and live like Christians. And the Christian church looked at them and said, what's that breed of cat? And they put them in jail because they didn't recognize them. Christians weren't acting like Christians. They were acting like the world, and when people came acting like Christians, they were queer.

And then here is faithfulness as the sixth root that I would mention. Now God rewards us for our faithfulness, but most of us want to be dramatic. We desire to get into the public eye. Publicity is our God in the day in which we live, so we want to do something that will be recognized. But fail to remember that God said, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Goodness and faithfulness are at the root of all the flowers that grow in the kingdom of God. Now let's look at goodness for a little bit.

Will Durant, I think he's not a Christian but he's a great philosopher, and he said this, that a good man, everything else being equal, will be infinitely more precious than a great man. I think he said a hundred times or five hundred times or something more precious than a merely great man.

You see, in the Bible there were good men who were not particularly great, like Jabez, say, that got three verses. There were great men who weren't good, like, say, Solomon or Ahab. There were great men who were good, and good men who were great, of course, but there were also good men who weren't great. And which is the target at which we

shoot? Which is it that we'd rather have? Do we want to be good, or do we want to be great?

Well, only God will know whether you'll ever be great or not. Greatness is something that it takes several generations to produce. You have to breed the greatness. Say, Churchill. He didn't come up by accident. It took several generations to produce a man of his size.

Now I'm not talking about his politics, I'm talking about his size. It took several generations to make a man like that. Nature had to be smiling on the genes and hormones and other strange mysteries down the years to produce a man of that vast size. Great indeed, but don't you think he'd have been greater if he'd been known also as a good man, if he'd been known as a man who loved God and in humility prayed, sought the face of the Lord, as many another great Englishman has done; Gladstone and Gordon and many another.

Yes, goodness is always better than greatness, and anybody can become good because the gospel of Jesus Christ came that men might be good.

I was preaching over in Keswick, New Jersey, and the song leader there, who was head of music at the Philadelphia School of the Bible; I said something about goodness. God's people ought to be good, and he came to me afterwards, and he said, Mr. Tozer, here's something amusing. He said, some time ago I sang a solo called "There is a Green Hill Far Away." Do you remember that one? He died to make us good, is one of the lines.

He said, after I had sung it, a man came down to the front and said, Mr. Curtis, why were you singing a modernistic song today? He said, modernistic song? Did I? He said, yes, you sang a modernistic song. You sang that Jesus died to make us good.

I don't know what Curtis did. I suppose he shrugged his shoulders and walked away. That's what I'd have done. Because what can you do with a man who believes that orthodoxy and nastiness go hand in hand, and modernism and goodness go hand in hand?

My brethren, it is a tragic misunderstanding of truth to teach that Jesus Christ did not die to make men good. He died to wipe away their past sins, to give them the new birth, to write their name in the Book of Life, to introduce them to the Father in eternal life. He died for all that. But the result of all that will be that they will be good men and women.

And when we say Christ died to make us good, we're not being modernists, we're being scriptural. He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost. What more could you say about a man? To put it on his tombstone and put it there honestly, somebody said about the graveyard, you walked through a graveyard and looked at all the tombstones and came out and said, I wonder where they bury the sinners.

Everybody here is a saint, obviously. But you can't make them saints by writing it on their tombstone. But if it can be honestly and without flattery written on a man's tombstone, here lies a man who was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost. What can you say about a man more than that? That's it.

Well, faithfulness, goodness and faithfulness, thou good and faithful servant. You can be sure there can be no goodness without faithfulness, and there's not likely to be any faithfulness without goodness.

I thought this morning of the dear old men who were faithful, Noah faithful in his day. If Noah had been a baseball fan or had retired early and gone to Florida, if Noah had something else in mind beside God's work, there'd have been no ark, and no seed preserved and no human race.

Abraham, if Abraham had on his wanderings downstruck uranium or gold and given up the idea of going down to Palestine and establishing a race there out of which Christ would come. If he had turned aside and built himself a little city and made himself mayor of it and lived on the fat of the land, where would we have been? Abraham was faithful and Moses. Scripture says about him, he was faithful to Him that called him and appointed him. How faithful Moses was.

Think of our Savior Jesus Christ. All the world was around him. The devil was there with his temptations, offering Him the world if He would not go to the cross. But Christ was faithful to us. Should we not be faithful to him?

A lot of you love this, church. You don't agree with everything I say, and you don't think I'm in any wise an angel with wings. You know better. But you do get help here. You do find the fellowship of truth here, and you do find spiritual life here.

But do you ever stop to think how many faithful people, some of them now dead, that helped to make this possible? Every stone in the wall was a tear, a faithful tear. And every cubic inch of air in this atmosphere felt the hot breath of somebody that was faithful. There must always be somebody faithful. Faithfulness is a wonderful root, and out of it there comes much good fruit.

I'm going to skip the last one and talk about, well, unselfishness. That's really the last one, so we'll mention that, not quite skip it. Unselfishness.

To live unselfishly, in service, in giving, in enduring, in loving, in working, in waiting. Faithful, useful, unselfish. Thinking first of God and then of myself.

Now, just in order that this might not be something floating around where you can't get to it, I want to bring this down where you can reach up and touch it if you have the courage. Christians who go on vacation, have you ever noticed this about them? Most of them, I don't say all, but I do say I've noticed it so often that I've almost given up looking for any change. They go away for a week or two weeks, God bless them, they're welcome, and I'm glad they can.

Get out of Chicago, smell and noise and dirt for a while, get somewhere that's good, if you can do it. But do you notice when God's people come home? Late Sunday night so they'll be ready for work Monday morning, not late Saturday night so they'll be ready for church Sunday morning. What does that indicate? It indicates a selfishness that's as

big as a goat, and a carelessness about the work of God. It shows where the real interest lies. It lies in their job and not in their church.

Drive all day Sunday on crowded highways to get here late Sunday night to be able to go to work Monday morning so as to keep the job. But never drive all day Saturday to get here late Saturday night to be in the house of God Sunday morning so as to keep the confidence of God on me. And then we say we're spiritual. I was born again; I do thank the Lord I was born again. Pray for me that I may hold out unto the end. You better do something about your root, brother. It's drying up on you.

The root of the righteous bringeth forth fruit. And if you're trying to get the fruit, frantically grasping after the fruit, neglecting the root, the fruit won't have any root to grow on and you'll find yourself without fruit or root before very long. Now if I've sounded harsh, I hope you won't think I really have been.

But I recommend that we try, as Jesus did, to please not ourselves but Him that called us. And if we do, if we're ready to be disciplined, that's what's wrong with us. We're not disciplined. We're not a disciplined people. Lent doesn't mean anything to us. We eat what we please. No discipline there.

So, we don't have the disciplines that are laid upon some churches, say the Roman Church. The disciplines are not on us. We have the Truth, and we have the experience, and then we go to pieces and live as we please, live on whimsical impulse. Nobody around to boss us.

We can't frighten anybody with purgatory. We don't believe in it. You can't frighten anybody with Latin words or long robes. We've got to depend upon faithfulness to God.

And that's why, for the most part, evangelical Christians are an undisciplined, careless lot of people, a disgrace to the name of Him who pleased not Himself but lived a life of careful discipline, imposed upon Himself by Himself, and finally went out to the cross and there in the last agony gave Himself to die for us unfaithful, undisciplined people.

Oh, my brethren, the fruit is sweet to the taste and the flowers are fragrant to the smell. Beautiful are the flowers and lovely is the garden. But somebody has to be in there on his knees digging at the roots with dirty hands and keeping the roots of his spiritual life right.

So lovely is faith and joy and peace in the heart of a Christian. Beautiful is Christian character and the sweet smile of the holy man or woman, beautiful indeed.

But that holy man or woman didn't get there by accident and he didn't get there by coddling himself. He got there by laying strong burdens on himself, by putting the yoke on his own neck and saying, for Christ's sake who bore the cross I'll bear the sweet self-imposed yoke.

So, let's settle for being good spiritual people and let them be great who can. Let's seek that we might be good and let's remember that goodness grows from a root of obedience, prayer, Bible reading, and surrender. Amen.