

CLINGING TO THE WRONG ROCK

By Carl McMurray

At my parent's home, where I did most of my growing up, in Huntsville, AL there are two maple trees in the front yard. Those two trees were small saplings when Dad bought the house about 40 years ago. They have been fertilized over the years and well watered on well drained soil. If you drive past the house today you will still see those maple trees. They probably stand about 8 to 10 feet tall. Yes, you read that right, 40 year old maple trees, 8 to 10 feet tall. You see the hill that my father's house was built on was solid rock with just a covering of soil. He could always grow a good garden there in the back yard, but in the front yard those trees just never grew. No matter how much sun and water and nutrient they got, they could not overcome the rock that was hidden below the surface of the yard.

At the house where my parent's now live, there are oak trees in the front yard. I know those trees because when my parents retired and moved to that house I helped Dad dig up the little trees about a foot tall from other parts of the property and re-plant them where they are. Those trees have grown and matured into the full sized oaks they were meant to be.

You may be wondering, what's the point? Is this a lesson on tree planting? I will tell you that I am not the one to be talking about planting trees, not with my brown thumb.

No, this is about growth. The natural world was created by the same One that created you and me. It is not wonder that many of the principles and laws that govern one also find application in the other.

My point is that no matter how much nutrient, water, and sun we shine on our spiritual self, it is the soil that makes the difference. That was Jesus' teaching in the parable of the four soils and the sower. Saying our prayers, reading our Bible lessons, and coming to church are very fine and good. If the soil is good then great things will grow from a heart like that. But if there are rocks beneath the surface that we refuse to remove, years of effort will only bring forth frustration and a stunted growth.

This rock may be a stubborn refusal to do what we know to be right, such as submit to obedient baptism or seek the forgiveness of brethren. It may be pride that keeps us from reconciling with a brother or sister. It may even be a worldly desire or craving that we have kept to ourselves and refused to give up, all the while claiming that Jesus was our Lord.

This is not a rock lesson however, just like it is not a tree lesson. It is a lesson about our heart, the soil, that God's seed takes root in. It is about encouraging that seed to grow and do its natural work, or stunting out own spiritual growth by clinging to a rock, the wrong rock, in our lives. As we prepare the soil of our heart on a daily basis, let's strive to remove the rocks (that we love to hold on to) that inhibit the growth of what we really desire.