

## GROWTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

(Discourse by Brother H. E. Deitrich of Flint, Mich.)

“The Righteous shall flourish as a Palm Tree; he shall grow up as a Cedar of Lebanon.”  
Psalm 92:12.

There is a wealth and depth of meaning in every line of the Bible could we but fathom the divine intention. Some have questioned—Why is not Scripture given in simple language so all might readily understand? We might well reply—For the same reason that gold is not found on top of the ground, where everyone could easily pick it up. The Lord wants man to dig for spiritual as well as earthly treasure.

Coming now to the text, “The Righteous shall flourish like the Palm Tree.” Why does the Lord in this connection liken the righteous to the palm tree? What is there about a palm tree that conforms to the character of a saint? In what respect does the palm tree flourish? Why did not Jehovah God liken a saint to some other tree? Why does he select the palm tree?

The palm tree is distinctive from all other trees of the forest—a peculiar tree. I speak of the date palm, of course—a fruit-bearing proposition, not the common palmetto tree which is so often mistaken for a palm. The palm is a peculiar tree. It somewhat resembles a telegraph pole, with a little tuft of green at the top. There is nothing about a palm tree to invite either respect or admiration. Just so it is with respect to the saint, the righteous. The Lord denominates these as a “peculiar people” (1 Pet. 2:9) and there is about them nothing that would command the respect or admiration of the average individual or passerby. We are distinctive from all others of mankind.

Their name is peculiar, not after Paul, or Luther, or Calvin; but they belong to Christ—they bear his name. Their talk is peculiar for others to hear—just one subject is precious and dear—THE PLAN OF THE AGES; “A ransom for all”; “Times of Restitution.” (Acts 3:19-21) Their food is the Word of God, which “rightly divided” (2 Tim. 2:15) becomes meat in due season. The deep things of God are plain to them. (1 Cor. 2:10) “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matt. 4:4; Rev. 10:8-10). Their dress is peculiar, it is not their own. It is the white spotless Robe of Christ’s Righteousness, which covers all our unwilling blemishes—we must keep it white. (1 Pet. 5:5; Psa. 45:11-15; Isa. 61:10) Their work is peculiar—they are reaping the field; they are wielding the sickle of Truth, gathering the wheat. Their rest is peculiar—they have entered into God’s rest. (Heb. 4:3) Their creed is peculiar, very short and not hard to learn, not man-made. (John 15:10-14) Their faith is also peculiar—they really believe God’s Word to be true. Their faith is built by hearing the Word and proving all things by a “thus saith the Lord.” Their hope is peculiar—they hope to attain joint-heirship with Jesus and to share His reign. Rom. 8:17.

The Palm Tree grows straight. It grows straight heavenward. This illustrates the intention of the saints, the righteous ones. Their course, like that of the Palm Tree, is heavenward and straight—no branching aside. God says “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” Notice the similitude. Not only does the palm tree grow straight heavenward, but it overtops all the other trees. In its majestic simplicity it rises far above the common kind. This is true of the righteous. In regal simplicity of heart they are exalted above their fellows in the Heavenly Father’s sight. They flourish like the palm tree. Col. 3:1-3; Phil. 2:9, 10; Eph. 1:17-23.

Now we begin to see why the Lord used that expression—the Palm Tree possesses characteristics befitting the character of a saint. Of all the forest growths the Palm Tree casts the least shadow. It does not interfere with the growth of its neighbor by hindering the rain and sunshine. So likewise the Lord’s people, the righteous, do not retard the growth and prosperity of other fellow-beings by preventing the rain of truth and the glorious sunlight of God from falling upon them. They do all they can to assist others who are entitled to a share of life’s blessings.

Again the Palm Tree is softest at the heart, whereas other trees are harder at the heart. This betokens the heart attitude of the righteous. In loving sympathy the saint endeavors to fulfill the law of God, cultivating the fruits and graces of the spirit day by day. More and more we see why the Lord used the Palm Tree to exemplify the character of the righteous. Oh, the depth of wisdom in the inspired Word! Could we but fathom its mighty depths! It is a wonderful Book to those whose spiritual eyes have been enlightened sufficiently to grasp the lengths and the heights and depths of God’s gracious plan for the salvation and redemption of mankind.

Of all the trees extant the Palm Tree has the fewest roots—has the least hold upon the earth. It has a main tap root, like a carrot extending straight down into the earth with minute rootlets just sufficient to maintain its upright position. All the nourishment it derives from mother earth is used in its upward building and not in securing an earthly hold. And so it is with the righteous—they are in the world but not of the world. All the vitality derived out of the world is employed for their uplift and spiritual welfare. They are not concerned in the securing of earthly rights and privileges. They, too, have the least possible hold upon the earth and its affairs. They are seeking to lay up treasures in heaven. “The righteous shall flourish like the Palm Tree.” How true!

The Palm Tree has another characteristic—it will not be repressed. Put a heavy stone slab over the spot where a Palm Tree starts to grow and note the result. It will lift that stone or grow around it and continue its course heavenward. In California near the Mariposa trail a settler in early days built himself a little cabin directly on the spot where a Palm Tree was growing. Did that cabin hinder the Palm Tree? Not much! The Palm

Tree came up through the floor of that cabin. It penetrated the ceiling and grew out through the roof. There stands the cabin, and there is the Palm Tree. The righteous are not easily repressed or swerved from their heavenward course. They refuse to be hindered by the difficulties and besetments of life. If impossible for them to remove an obstacle from their pathway, they will pass on around it, go over it, or, if necessary through it—any way to get where they are determined to be.

Let us ask again, Why did not the Lord use the stately oak tree in its majestic strength and stateliness, its vigor and beauty to exemplify the character of the righteous? Why not the common forest trees? Dear friends, they are not even green. Six months of the year these trees have the appearance of deadness. There is no growth, no prosperity. Would the Lord want his people apparently inert half the time of their existence on earth? Surely not. He wants them like the Palm Tree—ever green, ever showing signs of life, ever prosperous in the things pertaining to Almighty God and their own spiritual aggrandizement.

We note further: the older the Palm Tree, the more abundant, luscious and sweeter is its fruit. Besides, it bears early and late—has an extended fruit season; does not bear fruit for itself; holds forth its fruitage in clusters, so that one can help himself to much or little as may be desired. How appropriate all this is to the righteous characteristic. The longer the Christian is in the way of the Lord, the sweeter and more abundant his fruitage—the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, brotherly kindness and all those kindred virtues enumerated by the Apostle Paul. Come to the Christian early or late, in season or out of season, and secure this fruitage in large or small measure, as may be desired. We have not this fruitage for self, but for others in need. Here again we note the appropriateness of the text to the righteous characteristics—they (the righteous) “shall flourish like the Palm Tree.”

Another peculiarity of the Palm Tree: the dust of the desert (which adheres to trees ordinarily) does not accumulate on the Palm Tree. This may be likened to the righteous one keeping himself pure and unspotted, free from all earthly influences, free from contamination, free from the doctrinal dust that is blown by the winds—as “wind” in scriptural symbolism denotes doctrine.

Yet another point. There is in the palm locality in Palestine a poisonous vine known as the “tree killer” and which derives its name from the fact that it kills every tree with which it comes in contact by enshrouding the tree so thoroughly as to shut out all sunlight and by absorbing the moisture from the ground. The tree dies and the poison vine stands there in the form of the tree which gave it shape. No tree is known that will successfully resist the action of this “tree killer” save one alone, the Palm. It matters not how many of the “tree killing” vines may grow about and upon the Palm Tree. It survives. It remains alive. So with the righteous. Many and severe may be the troubles, besetments and

poisonous influences of this life; many and heavy the burdens which tend to destroy others. The saints of the Lord Most High, prosper, survive notwithstanding. They live right on and continue their heavenward course. Though bowed down beneath a load of care, the righteous ones flourish. It is written: "The righteous shall flourish like the Palm Tree."