



The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
Psalms 92:12

What does it mean to the Christian to flourish as the palm tree? What is the character of the cedar of Lebanon? Let's begin by considering the cedars of Lebanon – they grow straight and tall, and are rooted deeply in the rocky slopes of the ridges and mountains. Christians should stand tall in the faith, and abide on the high ground and not in the marshes of the world. The cedar, like the palm tree, sinks her roots deep into the earth and spreads them horizontally in the soil. The cedar is one of the few living creatures that are not subject to putrefaction or decay. The believing Christian is like the tall cedars of Lebanon – they stand erect and tall on the high ground and sink their roots deep into the soil of God's Word, and in that soil of His Word, they reach out in all directions. Just as the cross has a vertical beam joining, in love, God and His elect, so the horizontal cross beam is to illustrate our love for our fellows. The Christian is not subject to death: *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* (John 11:25-26) One salient point in the last verse of Jesus needs emphasis: *"whosoever liveth and believeth."* The decision to believe and receive Christ must be made while life remains, for there is no salvation in the grave.

There is a vast desert in Iran named the Desert of Death. Flying over this barren waste, one sees no visible sign of life; except here and there (and far in between) a group of palm trees, gathered close together, that identifies a haven of life for her dwellers of the oasis. The Christian believers may be scattered far and wide with little evidence of faith in between, but even in the deserts of death (the world) these Christians congregate in small groups where the Water of Life may be found deep under the desert crust. The superficially maintained gardens and parks of the city must be kept by the hand of man and watered daily, but the Palm Tree of the desert survives by the hand of God and not of man. Man does not know the sources of water that are attainable in the desert plains, but the Palm Tree, by the grace of God, is able to root deeply into the desert sands and gather water which was unknown to the human dowsers (or diviners). So at least in that respect, the Palm Tree is wiser than man – but his wisdom comes from God.

The Palm Tree to which we refer is the Middle Eastern Date Tree (they are one and the same).

How does this tree illustrate the qualities of righteous and how they flourish? There are at least nine points of commonality between the Palm Tree and the Christian:

1. The Palm Tree grows tall and is always looking and reaching upward. It is the only tree of which I am aware whose branches all shoot upward. The Christian is one who always is looking up to his Lord and he may be found early and late with his hands lifted in prayer and supplication. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Col 3:1-2)
2. The palm tree will not flourish in sodden soil or that which has been spread with the filth of animal waste. It desires the ground desolate of worldly treasures and where the soil is clean and natural. Christians should not cavort with the world, but seek higher ground upon which to stand. *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"* (2 Cor 6:17)
3. Like the new-born Christian, the Palm Tree is very weak when very young. It can barely stand on its own. But as it sinks its roots deeper and deeper into the soil, and taps the hidden water of life, it gathers tremendous strength. When growing near to each other, the roots of the Palm Trees embrace one another to make them even more formidable against the desert storms and winds.
4. The Palm Tree is not proud or presumptuous. They boast of no leafy branches below their crown which is closest to God at which they produce their fruit (dates). The Palm Tree is an exceptional Tree in that it is forever green in both summer and winter, never shedding its leaves. The high deserts of Iran are cold and icy in the winter months, yet the Palm Tree is not affected by changes in the environment just as the Christian maintains his faith even in face of worldly decadence. The righteous are like that wonderful Palm Tree: *"And 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."* (Psalms 1:3) They continue to produce their sweet, healthful fruits in winter and summer, spring and fall.
5. The Palm Tree is almost indestructible. The winds may blow it double, yet it rises, as the Christian from persecution, again and again to stand tall.
6. When we view a Palm Tree either near or far, we only view less than half of the tree. She sinks her roots deeper into the earth than she grows above it. The same is true of Christians. The hidden man of the Christian is not what we at first see. His strength is not in his outward appearance, but in his inwardly plunging deep root into the Word of God. His perseverance, fruit, and lofty faith distinguish him in time from all around. His strength is in his heart that is occupied by the love of Christ.
7. The Palm Tree is a symbol of victory. The branches were waved before conquering armies when they returned to Rome with their spoils. These were waved before Christ on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem via the Eastern Gate (or Gate of God in that day).
8. The branches of the Palm Tree were even honored to be cast at the feet of Jesus as He rode into the city. Men cast these branches before Christ, along with their robes.

Unbeknownst to them, I believe the cast down of their robes symbolizes the fact that we are incapable of covering our own sins and must petition for that Robe of righteousness which Christ purchased for us at the brow of Mount Calvary.

9. The wisdom of the Palm Tree, and the glory of the Cedar, is not generated by the trees themselves; but by the innate nature that God has imparted to its very being. It assumes the nature God has given it unlike man who denied that nature in Eden and followed a nature foreign to the righteousness of God.

Please consider again the powerful lessons we can learn from two evergreen trees of the Holy Land:

1. Grow and stand tall wherever we are planted, and not to depend upon the soil that man manipulates;
2. Stand tall, but rise again when bent double by trials;
3. Produce your fruits closest to the Lord and not man;
4. Sink your roots deep into the soil of God's Holy Word;
5. Retain your character (righteous nature) under all threats of the world;
6. Flourish beyond the cities of sin and wickedness which men have made – "*be ye separate, saith the Lord.*" (2 Cor 6:17);
7. Be upward looking to God and not downward looking to man.
8. Do not fail to assemble yourselves together with other faithful of the Lord. (Hebrews 10:25)
9. Join your roots of faith to those of other believers and keep strength together. A rope of five cords is many more times stronger than a single strand.

If you are full of faith, look to the tall Cedar and Palm.