



1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Trees are used as metaphors by God to describe both good and evil, but predominately He uses Trees as an example of the righteous person. “*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.*” (Psalm 1:3) There are many diverse kinds of trees in God’s green earth, as well as in His Kingdom Paradise. The superbly blessed Christian is just like that tree referenced above that is planted by the Rivers of the Water of Life. But there are other trees cherished by God that are not materially so blessed. The mighty Desert Palm Tree of the deserts of Iran and Arabia flourish in austere circumstances. They are fitted for the dry and wilderness climate where God has planted them. Severe climactic conditions have strengthened them to be among the strongest of trees. They are, by far, the tallest trees of all, but their greater appearance is hidden to the eyes of men for the root system penetrates at great depths into the desert floor in search of nourishing water and minerals. So the root system of the Desert Palm is more than twice the size of what we see exposed above the surface.

There are many Christians who are very much like the Desert Palm. They flourish under austere and harsh conditions of persecution and want; yet, their greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven goes unobserved by the greater church abroad. Their roots are sunk deep into the hidden rivers of God. I am reminded of those devoted Christians of the Levant who suffer beheadings, torture and untold miseries in refusing to renounce their Lord and Savior. Such faith puts the average church-goer in America to shame.

There are, too, fruit trees that provide nourishment and refreshment to mankind. They flourish in warm and humid climates for that purpose. Not only is their fruit sweet to the taste, but their blossoms are fragrant to the sense of smell. Many such fruit

trees were planted long ago by God, and they are now elderly and stooped; yet, they still bear sweet fruit and make us glad with their company. They are examples to us of God's blessing.

There are also the tall and erect Cedars of Lebanon that remind us of the uncompromising Christian witness who would rather suffer the fires of martyrdom than to submit to a lie. But even the Cedar of Lebanon will grow up crooked if it is not kept straight by its Maker. Children must be trained to grow up straight and tall as the Cedars of Lebanon. If we fail to do that, the knots and twists of sin will mar their growth.

All trees are beneficial to mankind and to animal life as well. Mankind and animals need clean, pure air to breathe. But the air we breathe out is toxic with carbon dioxide. The trees need carbon dioxide which they absorb and emit as oxygen. The whole air of our planet is replenished daily by trees. We build our dwellings with trees, make our furniture from their branches, and heat our home fires with the product of trees. I should mention, too, that trees provide a cool shade in the heat of the summer day. The Christian's testimony and life should reflect that same characteristic of the tree. We take in the poisons of the world and turn them to healthful works. Being, as we are charged by Christ, the salt of the earth, our life and works lift up all of mankind to the benefits of Christ. We build homes for the homeless and provide fruit for the hungry. When the heat of life is greatly intensified, the Christian provides cooling counsel and shade for the weary and lost.

The Righteous Trees

- 1 God's Elect *"shall be called Trees of righteousness."* (Isa 61:3)
- 2 They are the planting of God and not of themselves. *"The planting of the Lord."* (Isa 61:3)
- 3 The Trees of righteousness are full of a spiritual life that the world cannot comprehend. *"The trees of the LORD are full of sap."* (Psalm 104:16) The life-giving sap is the life of the tree.
- 4 The Trees of Righteousness are forever fruitful and living (they shall never die in old age)! *"They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."* (Psalm 92:14)
- 5 Just as the Two Trees of the Garden at Eden, we shall know a tree by its fruits: *"¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."* (Matt 7:15-20) The fruits of the Tree are the same as those of the Spirit – they do not elevate one believer above another, or cause to speak in confusing and warbled tongues. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* (Gal 5:22-23)
- 6 Just as the fruitful tree sheds its seed upon the earth for procreating its kind, so does the Christian win souls to Christ by their natural force and testimony. *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."* (Prov 11:30)
- 7 The Trees of Righteousness are as Cedars of Lebanon: *"The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars."* (Psalm 80:10) The cedar is noted for its grandeur and nobility. It grows rapidly and lives long. Its wood protects from the moth.
- 8 Trees of Righteousness are as the Desert Palm. That tree is lofty, fruitful in the desert, and beautiful. It reaches its green leafy arms up to God in the wilderness where no other will do so. *"¹² The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in*

the courts of our God.” (Psalm 92:12-13)

9 Trees of righteousness are as the Green Olive Tree: *“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”* (Romans 11:16-18) What beauty of expression is found in the hidden gems of this comparison. The First Fruit of the Resurrection is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is holy. If we are the branches of that Holy Root, we must also be Holy. *“Be ye holy; for I am Holy.”* (1 Peter 1:16 & Lev 11:44) There is only one Son of God by right of blood kinship – the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our root and branch. We are grafted in as the wild olive branch into that Life-Giving Vine. We are sons and daughters by adoption (grafting) and not of the same substance of the Father.

There is yet another example of the Tree of Righteousness. On the lawn of an old church which I once pastored, stood an ancient oak tree – perhaps as old as the church (200+ years). It spread its branches gloriously over the entire yard of the church, and gave respite from the hot southern Alabama sun. When I enquired of the age of the tree, one of the elderly parishioners said it looked just the same when she was a little girl (70 years previous). She told me that an old man used to ride his mule-drawn wagon to church each Lord’s Day. The old mule he tied to the old Oak Tree.

One Sunday, the old man failed to come to church due to some minor illness; however, the mule did, indeed, come to church and took his familiar place in the shade of the old Oak. After service, the men of the church tried to get hold of the mule to take it home, but it would not budge from the shade of the tree. When greater force was used to move the aged mule, it went berserk and the men shot and killed the mule. I consider this a great sorrow, but it happened. Why would the old mule not move from the tree?

I believe he had always found shade and comfort under that old tree from the days of his youth, and now, in his last days, he refused to surrender the comfort of his friend – the old Oak Tree. It was a thing in his life that had never ceased to give him comfort in the heat of the summer, and that old Oak never changed or moved. It was worth dying for. Well, there is something worth dying for to us as well. But Christ did the real dying for us, and we must not waver from the shade of that ancient Tree of Life that never moves. If we were worth the dying for by that old Tree of Life, should that Tree not be worth the living by us?