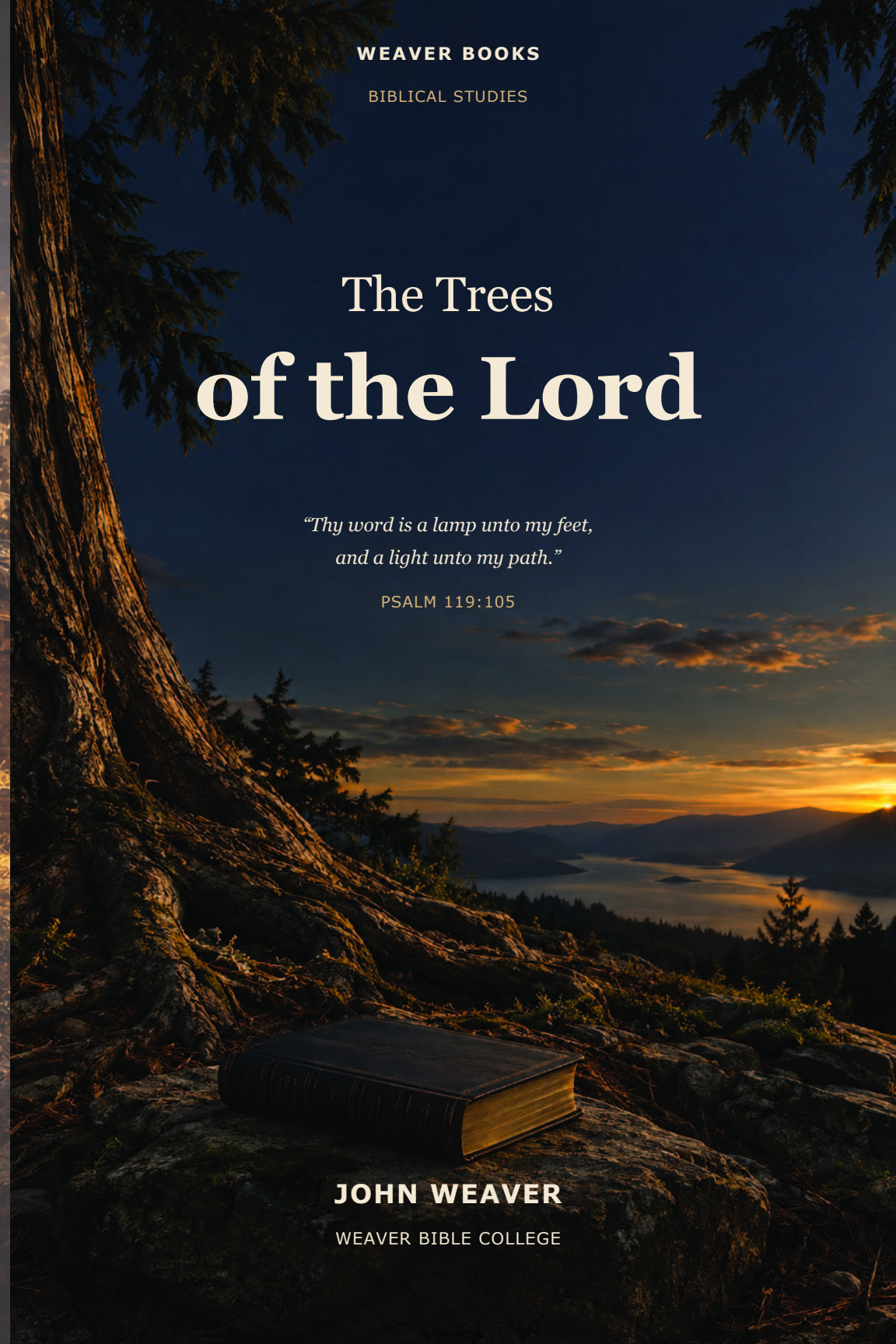
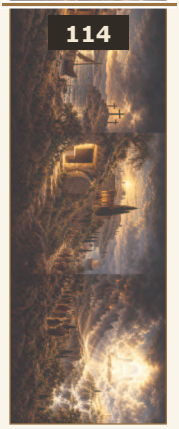

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The Trees
of the Lord
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."
PSALM 119:105
JOHN WEAVER
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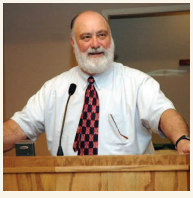
The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.

PSALM 104:16

Biblical images of trees connect growth, nourishment, and enduring fruitfulness. John Weaver considers the trees of the Lord through this series of messages, asking what these pictures teach about dependence and spiritual life. Readers are invited to examine both the roots and the fruit of their own conduct.

"The interesting thing is that, when you read through the Bible, you find that trees are used not only to represent Christians, but also to teach many other truths applicable to our lives."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

The Trees of the Lord 3 of 3

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 92:1-15 (KJV)

Introduction and Review of Psalm 92

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery, and upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever. But thou, Lord, art most high forevermore. For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. Mine eye also shall see my desire upon mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up

> against me. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.
>
> They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.
>
> I hope that you will take the time, if you have not done so, to listen to the two previous messages, because in the first message, when I began dealing with Psalm 92, I only dealt with the first five verses.

By way of introduction, I shared with you my time with Rush Dooney out in California, when he took us to the giant sequoia trees and shared for over an hour how those sequoias and Christians had a lot of attributes in common. I then demonstrated from Psalm 92, verses 1 through 5, that this is indeed a psalm of creation. I also pointed out that this psalm was sung in the tabernacle and in the temple on the Sabbath day.

In the second message, I began with verse 6 and went down through verse 11. In verse 6, David said it like this: "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." I pointed out that a brutish man is someone who does not think. He does not understand, meditate, or comprehend. A brutish man is someone who simply lives by his feelings and by his instincts—a brute beast. David says again, "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this."

I pointed out that a fool in the Bible is not a mentally deficient person, but someone who will not listen, who will not take heed, and who will not learn. When you look at verse 6 and understand what David is saying—"A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth the fool understand this"—what is it that a brutish man does not know and a fool does not understand? That is when you look at verse 7, because here is what David is explaining: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever."

So, in this psalm, the wicked are compared to grass and the righteous are compared to trees. There are obvious differences

between grass and trees. First and foremost, grass grows quickly, while trees grow very slowly. If you have ever had a garden, you understand that. If you are waiting for pecans, they grow very slowly, or pears, or peaches, or whatever. Trees grow slowly, and grass grows very quickly. Secondly, grass will grow and prosper in an area where trees will not. You can always find grass. You can even find grass in the desert. Thirdly, grass has a very short lifespan, while trees have a very long lifespan.

The Wicked Compared to Grass

Fourthly, grass is grown simply to be cut down, either for fodder or food for animals, or for aesthetic purposes. In verse 7, he says, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever." Verse 9 confirms it: "For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered."

So it is not grass that I want to focus upon today, but rather trees, because we are at the end of this psalm. Trees are used frequently in the Bible to convey various truths. Wisdom, for instance, is referred to as a tree of life. In Proverbs 3 and verse 18, the Bible says concerning wisdom, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone that retaineth her."

Trees as a Biblical Metaphor for the Righteous

A wholesome tongue, or someone who knows how to speak accurately and truthfully, is also compared to a tree of life. Proverbs 15 and verse 4 says, "a wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach of spirit." In the New Testament, our Lord also used trees to illustrate His preaching. In Luke chapter 21 and verse 29, the Bible says, "Then he spake a parable unto them, Behold the fig tree, and all the trees." Our Lord used trees in speaking and teaching as well.

Today I want to show you several things concerning trees. First of all, notice verses 12 and 13: the trees of the Lord are planted trees. Verse 12 says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

I told you last week that the righteous are likened not only to palm trees and cedar trees here in Psalm 92, but also to willow trees in Isaiah and myrtle trees in the book of Zechariah. Here the Bible tells us that the trees of the Lord are planted trees: "Those that be planted"—our Father, of course, is the great forester and the great planter of trees.

The Trees of the Lord Are Planted Trees

He did so in the very beginning. Genesis chapter 2 and verse 9 tells us, "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree to grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." So God planted all of the trees.

He is indeed the true and great forester. People are likened to trees in the Bible, and we are likened unto His planting. In Numbers chapter 24, Balaam was a false prophet, but God used him and forced him to speak the truth. Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel, but God turned the curses into a blessing, and all Balaam was able to do was bless Israel.

“And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents, according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

“And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!”

“As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the water.” Here he talks about the trees of lign aloes and the cedar trees. Balaam’s prophecy harkens back to the Garden of Eden, for Genesis 2 and verse 8 says, “the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed.” All of these trees were there in the garden.

The aloe trees furnished the ancients with one of the most fragrant and precious spices. Psalm 45, speaking about Solomon and, of course, the Lord Jesus who is the greater Solomon, says, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” Psalm 92 says, “the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; those that be planted in the house of the Lord.” Numbers chapter 24 and verse 6 says they are like the lign aloes planted by the Lord. Do you understand that God plants trees?

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever planted a tree? Have you ever planted several trees? Have you ever planted a garden, a garden of vegetables or a garden of flowers? I am asking these questions for a reason: so that I may ask you another question. If you have ever planted a tree or a lot of trees, or if you have ever planted a garden of herbs, flowers, or vegetables, did you plant those trees on purpose, or did you do it accidentally? Obviously, you will say, “I planted those trees on purpose. I intended to do that.”

Now let me ask you: if you are wise enough, as a fallen, depraved individual, to plant your trees and your gardens purposefully, do you not think that the sovereign, omniscient God of heaven and earth is wise enough to do the same? God has never done anything accidentally. Everything that God does is intentional, and it is on purpose.

May I remind you of Ephesians 3 and verse 11, where Scripture says, “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So God chose us and God placed us purposely and deliberately. It was no accident that God saved you. It was not luck, chance, or fortune. It was not happenstance. What God did, He did purposefully. Let me show you. Hold Psalm 92, but turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1. I want you to understand the word “purpose” here.

Ephesians 1, verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him”—that is, in Jesus Christ—“before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

himself according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

The Bible says He chose us in Jesus Christ. He did so according to the pleasure of His will, and Ephesians 1:9 speaks of "which he hath purposed in himself." God planted us purposefully.

Second Timothy 1:8–10 tells us, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;" God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

When did God give us grace in Christ Jesus? The answer is, before the world began.

Verse 10 says, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The truth and reality of that eternal purpose and grace that God has given us is made clear, plain, and manifest by the Father sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has planted us in the most nourishing and richest soil possible: His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible says in Ephesians 3:17, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love." God planted us, rooted us, and grounded us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Please understand the purpose. That is why Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his" what?

So God purposefully planted us. He planted us in faith, in grace and mercy, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His eternal purpose. We are the trees of His planting. Therefore, we can say, along with the

Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “I am what I am only by the grace of God.” The trees of the Lord are planted trees.

The Trees of the Lord Are Placed Trees

Psalm 92:12 says, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” We are not only His planted trees; we are His placed trees. When you plant a tree or a garden, you purposely place it. Nobody plants a garden right under a group of oak trees and pine trees. You place it where it will produce, and plant those trees in the most opportune spot, in the richest, most nourishing soil.

God plants His trees and places them in the house of the Lord. David said in Psalm 52:8, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.” God places the trees He planted in His house.

As Spurgeon said, “Those professors who are rooted to the world do not flourish. Those who send forth their roots into the marshes of frivolity and pleasure cannot be in a vigorous condition. For those who dwell in habitual fellowship with God shall become men of full growth, rich in grace, happy in experience, mighty in influence, honored and honorable.” Much depends upon the soil in which a tree is planted. Everything in our case depends upon abiding in Jesus Christ and deriving all our supplies from Him. If we really grow in the courts of the Lord’s house, we must be planted there, for no tree grows in God’s garden self-sown. Once planted of the Lord, we shall never be rooted up, but in His courts we shall take root downward and bring forth fruit upward to His glory forever and ever.

Albert Barnes says that the courts of the house of God were properly the open spaces around the tabernacle or temple, though the word can also denote the tabernacle or temple itself, designating a place where God was worshipped.

It has this meaning here. The passage affords an encouragement to parents to train up their children in attendance on the ordinances of public worship. It shows the advantage of having been born in the

church and trained up in it, an advantage which few can really appreciate.

It is far better to be brought up in a church where the truth is preached and taught. I was raised in church, and so was my wife. We were there Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night; if there were special meetings, we were there then. But I never really remember hearing the gospel in the church where I was raised. Now, it could have been me, but I do not really remember hearing it.

The truth of the matter is this: God places the trees that He plants in the courts of His house. I will be absolutely honest with you. I have real, genuine problems with professing Christians who state that they are in Jesus Christ and saved, but hardly ever attend public worship in the church. They think they can simply worship privately and avoid public worship.

When you begin studying the book of Acts, you find that those whom the Lord saved were praising God and having favour with all the people; and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. In Acts 4, an additional five thousand men were saved. Do you think God just left them out in the open?

No, they were joined with the others. That is why in Acts 4 and verse 32, the Bible says, “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” The Lord added to the church. Read the book of Acts and read the epistles.

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul writes to Timothy, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Notice that he defines the house of God as “the church of the living God,” and then calls it “the pillar and ground of the truth.”

The church is the house of God. The church is the pillar and ground of truth. The theme of 1 Timothy is “that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God.” You can go through 1 Timothy and find out how you are to live and how you are to act. In other words, it is your duty, your obligation, and your responsibility to live and act in the house of God the way God demands that you do so.

It is also the duty, obligation, and responsibility of pastors to preach and teach the whole Word of God, so that you will know how to live and how to act—not just in church, but in the totality of life. If the church is the pillar and ground of truth, you should be able to find truth in the church of God. If you are not able to find truth in the church, it may not be the Lord's church. It may be a church, but not necessarily the Lord's church.

Those whom He plants, He places in the church, the house of God. If you do not find yourself worshiping and being taught in church, you need to ask yourself whether or not you have been planted by the Lord. Those whom He plants, He places in His house. So the trees of the Lord are planted trees. They are placed trees. If you look back in Psalm 92, verses 13 and 14, we will also find that they are prosperous trees. Look in verse 12.

The Trees of the Lord Are Prosperous Trees

He says, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon; those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Look in verse 14: "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;" having been planted and placed by the Lord. They will grow there. They will send out their boughs, send out their roots, and prosper. Those whom God plants and places always prosper. Why?

Because they do not lack anything. In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, the Bible says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We have everything we need in Jesus Christ. If we have been planted and placed, we are bound to be prosperous in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Albert Barnes said, "This passage affords an encouragement to parents to train up their children in attendance over the ordinances of public worship, and it shows the advantage of having been born in the church and having been trained up in it, an advantage which no one can fully appreciate." He continues: "The passage may also be regarded as furnishing a proof of what will be the result of being thus planted and nurtured in connection with the church inasmuch as

trees carefully planted and cultivated are expected to produce more and better fruit than those that grow wild."

And that is certainly true. The Prince of Preachers said, "'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God' are not distinctive of some from others as though some only of the flourishing righteous were so planted, but they are descriptive of them all with an addition of the way and means whereby they are caused to grow and to flourish. And this is their implantation in the house of the Lord, that is, the church, which is the seat of all the means of spiritual life, both as unto growth and flourishing, which God is pleased to grant unto believers. To be planted in the house of the Lord is to be fixed and rooted in grace communicated by the ordinances of divine worship. Unless we are planted in the house of the Lord, we cannot flourish in His courts." And that is certainly true.

Have you ever wondered about people who say that they are believers and Christians, yet never grow or mature? They seem worldly and carnal. They seem to say, "I'm not interested in studying the Bible; I'm not interested in learning truth." And how about all of those who say, "Well, I used to go to church"? You know what the Bible says in 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us." The very proof that someone has been planted and placed by God is that they are prosperous: they grow and mature.

The Trees of the Lord Are Productive Trees

The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted. The trees of the Lord are full of sap. That is, you have something in you; you are being nourished. Isaiah 61:3 says, "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." We are to be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. Thus, the trees of the Lord are planted trees, placed trees, and prosperous trees.

They are also productive trees: “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.” Old age does not hinder spiritual production. In fact, usually the best fruit is from the older trees. They have weathered all the storms, survived the droughts and the onslaught of insects and disease, and are still producing fruit.

There is no retirement in the things of God. Unhappily, many older Christians tend to think that they are helpless and useless. The answer is no, a thousand times no. Older Christians are to be fathers and mothers to younger Christians. We are to communicate and pass on to them the things which we have learned and been taught, enabling them, many times, to avoid what we fell into and encouraging them in holiness.

Hold Psalm 92, but look back in your Bibles to Psalm 71. I want to show you something. I love this passage. The older you get, the more I think you love certain verses and certain chapters. This one is one of my favorites. Look at Psalm 71, verse 18:

“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”

Note what he said: “now when I’m old and grayheaded”; that would include some of you. I kind of wish Brother Tom had said, “now when I’m old and bald headed,” but he didn’t. I don’t know that I can grow gray hair. I can’t grow anything, I don’t believe, except on my chin. But he said, “when I’m old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”

Look at Psalm 71, verses 5 and 6. David says, “For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.” He says, “You’ve been my trust from my youth.”

Then, in verse 17: “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.” Now look in verse 18 again: “Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”

Do you understand what David is saying? David has said, “I have trusted you from a youth. Not only from a youth, but now middle age, and not only during middle age, but old age.” He trusted God from his youth—not only through youth, but through middle age, and not only during middle age, but through old age. A life lived from youth to manhood to old age in the faith is worth more than anyone could possibly imagine.

If we live in the faith and walk in the faith, an older Christian has so much more to offer. We tend to look at older people and think, Well, they're useless. I may not be able to deadlift 300 pounds, but I do know a few things. It is interesting, not only as a pastor but as a father—and you fathers will understand this—how you try to keep your children from falling into the same sins and traps that you fell into.

But seemingly, they just will not listen. Then, when they fall into the same sin or trap, they say, "I wish I'd listened to my father. I wish I'd listened to my pastor. He tried to tell me, but I wouldn't listen." A lot of times, that is because young people think they know everything when they do not, or because they think old people do not know anything. They think older folks are just trying to keep them from having fun and from doing their thing. No. A lot of times, they are just trying to save them from heartache, danger, and death.

Solomon, the wise man, gave an admonition to the youth in Ecclesiastes 12 and verse one: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Somebody thinks, "I'm going to sow my wild oats while I'm young, and when I get old, I'll turn to the Lord." It will not work like that. If we remember Him in our youth and middle age, I can assure you He is not going to forget us in our old age.

Henry Klingler and I used to tease each other. When I turned 65, Henry came up to me with a smile and said, "Well, Pastor. You can retire now you're 65." I just chuckled, because he knew I was not going to retire, and I cannot retire. Not for the Lord can retire me, but I cannot quit preaching, and I will preach until He does retire me. Just because you get old does not mean that you cannot do some

things. If you look back in Psalm 92, verse 14 says, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

"They shall be fat and flourishing." The word "flourishing" literally means to be green. The image is taken from a tree that is still green in old age. In other words, it gives no indication of decay, uselessness, or worthlessness. Age may make many things decay, but it makes a Christian flourish. Joseph Caryl said it like this: "What a divine climax doth the Spirit of God make in this scripture to show that the godly man as to his state is so far from declining that he's still climbing higher and higher in his old age."

So the trees of the Lord are indeed productive. One last thought: the trees of the Lord are also pruned trees. Why do you prune a tree? You prune it so it will produce more fruit. You cut off the useless limbs and the useless sprouts—the tree is shaped and honed so that it will bring forth much fruit. Pruning does not hurt the tree. It helps the tree.

The Trees of the Lord Are Pruned Trees

In John 15, our Lord says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

So God prunes us. He takes away the useless sprouts and the useless branches, that we may bring forth more fruit.

Isaiah 60:21 says, “Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of

my hands, that I may be glorified." God says, "Thy people shall all be righteous." They are the branch of His planting, the work of His hands.

Someone has written it like this: "The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in blossoms in the spring. The aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples: more deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see; more meekness of wisdom; more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace; more maturity of judgment in divine things; more confidence in God; more riches of experience."

"The trees of the Lord are full of sap." Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. When you understand that Psalm 92 is a psalm of creation, specifically speaking about God's trees, you understand that the saints of God are likened unto trees.

The next time you look at your trees, or any trees, stop and think. These trees have been planted. These trees have been placed. These trees are prosperous and productive. They probably have been, or will be, pruned. Why? To enable them to bring forth much fruit.

Conclusion and Application

Ask yourself: Have you been planted by the Lord? If you have been planted by Him, you have been placed in His house. If you have been placed in His house, you should be prosperous, growing in faith, and productive, producing spiritual fruit. Read Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit. You should also expect to be pruned—to have useless ideas, attitudes, dispositions, and actions cut off.

The pruning shears may hurt momentarily, but it will be for your benefit, that you bring forth much fruit, and for His honor and glory. The Bible tells us, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Why? "To show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock.

There is no unrighteousness in Him. So our lives should demonstrate that the Lord is upright, that He is my rock, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him, because He planted us and placed us. We are the trees of His planting.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. As we look at trees, help us remember that they should be a picture of what we are to be. Teach us to consider Thy creation. Thou didst tell us that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Teach us not only out of Thy creation, but specifically out of Thy Word. May we learn from general revelation, and even more from Thy special revelation, without discounting the general revelation in Thy creation. Help us to love Thee, to live for Thee, and to be very prosperous and very productive in Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Trees of the Lord

Part One of Three

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 92:1-14 (KJV)

Introduction to Psalm 92 and the Series

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery, upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep.

A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever: but thou, Lord, art most high forevermore. For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn. I shall be anointed with

> fresh oil. Mine eye also shall see my desire upon mine enemies; mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright.

The Trees of the Lord

The Importance and Blessings of Trees

"He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Trees, of course, are a very important industry and have many blessings besides the financial aspect. They are beautiful and protective; they bring joy, comfort, and gladness, especially through their fruits, nuts, and shade. One of my favorite verses is that every man shall abide under his own vine and under his own fig tree, because I love grapes and figs as well. That is another tree mentioned in the Bible.

I have been around trees all my life, and I do not see how I could ever live in the desert or in a place where there are absolutely no trees, or at least a few trees. There are so many uses of trees. I tell everybody, number one, I love trees. Number two, evidently the Lord loves trees as well, because He made so many of them. I have a friend who is a forester, and I have known other foresters as well.

It is interesting to talk with them because they can tell you about every tree, the uses of the wood of that particular tree, and the distinctions and differences between those woods. It is absolutely amazing. Moreover, there are so many items we get from trees, and we are so ignorant and uninformed that we are often very ungrateful and unthankful for what God has provided.

I suppose you know that hair dye, sponges, corks, paper, latex rubber gloves, car wax, chewing gum, and chocolate come from trees. You say, "Chewing gum comes from trees?" Yes, it does. When I was a boy, we could not afford chewing gum or get to town to buy

any if we had the money. So we would go out to the pine trees, break off some rosin, put it in our mouths, and chew it.

We used to eat and chew dog candy as well. Do you know what dog candy is? When cane syrup was made, it would become very hot on the edge of the kettle and crystallize. If you did not get it first, the dogs would come and lick it off after the syrup had been made. That is why it was called dog candy. You could eat it; it was basically pure sugar.

There are many things that we simply get from trees, and the importance of trees cannot be over-exaggerated. Without trees, without plants, we would not be alive. Earth would be uninhabitable. We do not understand how valuable trees really are. Trees themselves do not make oxygen, but through photosynthesis they take carbon dioxide and convert it into oxygen. Without these trees, we would have very little air to breathe.

Christians Likened to Trees in Scripture

The interesting thing is that, when you read through the Bible, you find that trees are used not only to represent Christians, but also to teach many other truths applicable to our lives. In Psalm 92:12, he says, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” In this one verse, Christians are likened to palm trees and cedar trees. In Isaiah 41, Isaiah 55, and Zechariah chapter 1, we are also likened unto myrtle trees. In Isaiah 44, we are likened unto willow trees. Thus, various trees in the Bible represent Christians.

Years ago I was visiting R. J. Rushdoony. He has been dead now a number of years; I think 2001 is when he died. Rushdoony used to come to our church, visit in our home, and then Alice and I would go out and visit with him. He was a scholar to the nth degree. Back in the seventies, he had 50,000 volumes in his personal library and read all the time. We always found it interesting to go into his home: the coffee table was piled high with books, as were the spaces beside it, each couch, and each chair. When you went to the bathroom, there was a pile of books on each side of the toilet. Rush read about a book a day, sometimes two a day, and he would read from four or five different books at one time.

He could keep it all separated. He had quite a mind on him. One time he called me and said, “Dorothy is going to be visiting her family in Scotland for two weeks. Would you like to come out and study with me?” I said, “I most certainly would.” I went out and spent two weeks with him. While I was there, he asked, “Do you want to go see the big trees?” I said, “Yes, I guess so,” but I really was not that impressed, because where I was raised, from the time I was seven until just a few years back, there was an oak tree in front of our house that would take five to seven adults holding hands to reach around.

I had seen huge trees before. In fact, Alice and I lived in Thomasville, and the largest oak in the state of Georgia is located there. When he said “big trees,” I thought, “Well, I have seen some big trees.” It was about an hour or so away. As we passed a number of pine trees, I saw pine trees probably larger around than fifty-five-gallon drums. That still did not impress me, because we have pine trees that big around in South Georgia as well.

But when we got to the giant sequoias, or giant redwoods, my mouth actually fell open, and I almost tripped on it. I could not believe it. There was one stump there, and I think Stephen Lorraine has seen that stuff. It was about six feet high. I walked across it; it took me seventeen steps. It is called a mammoth tree. A black-and-white picture of it from the 1800s shows thirty-two people dancing on the stump, with room for more, and people around it as well.

It is absolutely astounding when you see this. Pictures cannot convey the reality of the magnitude of these trees. Even when Alice took pictures, she had to take them in sections because the tree was so high that she could not get it all in one frame. These trees are absolutely magnificent.

These giant sequoias have very specific requirements for growth. They normally grow in a 260-mile strip of mixed-conifer forest on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, primarily from 5,000 to 7,000 feet up.

There are some coastal redwoods as well. Another thing about these giant sequoias is that they can live more than 3,000 years. In

fact, some of the ones that we have seen and that we have pictures of were alive when David and Solomon were on the thrones of Israel.

Let that sink in. These trees were alive when David and Solomon were on the thrones of Israel. If you go to Yosemite and go to the village there, there is a section of a redwood, or giant tree, cut round. It is only about, I guess, this thick. But as you look at it, there are little flags on certain of all these rings. I forget exactly where it starts, but here is one little flag: Magna Carta, 1215. Another little flag: Columbus discovers America, 1492. Here is another one, and another one. In other words, just that one tree, the rings on it cover thousands of years.

I might be mistaken, but I almost think the birth of Christ is on that. It is astounding when you realize how old these trees become. Their branches can be eight feet in diameter. That is a branch. One tree has enough wood to build ten two-story houses. Their bark can be three feet thick. There is one coastal redwood that measured a stunning 379.1 feet tall. These trees can be as tall as a 26-story building. Stop and think about that.

The General Sherman Tree, which I hate to mention—I cringe at pronouncing that name—is a giant sequoia and boasts 52,508 cubic feet. Every time we visit there and I have my picture taken, I sit so conspicuously as to cover the name Sherman. I do not want it to be seen. But the General Sherman Tree is not only the largest living tree, but the largest living organism by volume. It is at least 2,100 years old, weighs 2.7 million pounds, is 275 feet tall, and has a circumference of 102 feet.

The General Grant is next to it. It is the second-largest tree by volume, with 46,608 cubic feet. The third-largest tree, known as the President, has over 2 billion leaves. It is over 3,240 years old. After I began to see some of these sequoias, I had the wind knocked out of my sails and had to admit I had never seen big trees before. I thought I had seen some big trees. Rush then looked at me and asked, "Would you like to know how these trees apply to Christians?"

Lessons from Giant Sequoias: Clustering for Mutual Support

First of all, he pointed out that all of these sequoias were in clusters or in groups. For instance, if you go to Sequoia National Park, you will notice that they are always grouped together. One of the most famous groups is known as the Parker Group. It almost sounds like an insurance agency or something, but it is a clique of lawyers; all it is is a group of giant sequoia trees.

I love that particular group because not only are the trees extremely close together, but there are little nooks and crannies in these trees where you can go in and stand in them, having your picture taken. In fact, there are pictures of an entire company of soldiers with their horses inside one of these trees. It was hollow. There are also some of these trees in which men made houses and lived in them for years. The Parker Group is a group of trees very close together, and if you look out, you will see other trees that are grouped very close together.

Rush said, "Let me explain to you why these trees are so closely grouped together." He said, "It is because, although they are tall and heavy, their roots are very shallow. So they grow together, their roots get intertwined, and each tree helps hold up the other tree. Without them being in groups, they are in far greater danger of just being blown over as individuals."

Now let this sink in for just a moment. I want you to see originally how the Christians, the first Christians, stayed together. The truth of the matter is, if a Christian really wants to be taken by the world and taken by the wolves, all he has to do is separate himself from the other Christians. In Acts chapter 2, verse 44, the Bible says, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common."

Notice that the early Christians were together. They had all things together and had all things common, "and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The Apostle Paul said to the Roman Christians, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." You are capable of helping and taking care of each other. In Galatians 6, verses 1 and 2, he says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual"—and now he is talking about Christians—"ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

We need to stay together in order to help each other. First Peter 3:8 says, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Rushdoony pointed out clearly that these trees were grouped and clustered together because they needed each other. They had to have mutual support, and certainly that is true concerning Christians.

Lessons from Giant Sequoias: Resistance to Rot, Beetles, and Fire

The second thing he pointed out concerning these giant sequoias is that they are incredibly hardy and resist fungal rot and wood-boring beetles. Their thick bark is flame resistant; the flames do not hurt the trees. They are loaded with tannic acids. Let me make the application: Christians also are equally resistant to worldly rot and to the beetles of flesh and destruction.

When I say that we are resistant, that does not mean that some of us do not have problems, but the truth of the matter is that problems will not overcome us, nor will they destroy us. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Galatians 5, verse 24: “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.” We have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof. In other words, we are not living for the flesh. The Apostle Paul said it almost the same way in Galatians 6 and verse 14. He said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

So once again we are going to find out that, just like these sequoia trees, we are resistant to the fungal rot and to the wood-boring beetles. You remember that passage in First John 2, verses 15 and 17,

where John wrote this: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Now, the interesting thing is, when you look at these trees and see that thick bark, and understand that they are not only impervious to rot and to beetles, but they are also impervious to fire. They are fire resistant. In fact, fire actually helps them. Let me make this application. Do you remember that passage in Matthew chapter 3 when the Pharisees and Sadducees came out to John's preaching, and he said to them, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Now the wrath to come deals with God's judgment upon the ungodly. And if you will study that passage in Matthew chapter 3, John said concerning our Lord that “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”

I have heard Christians say, at least professing Christians, “Well, I want to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire,” and my response is, “Not me. I don't mind being baptized with the Holy Ghost, but I don't want to be baptized with fire.” If you look in the context of Matthew chapter 3, it is believers who are baptized with the Holy Ghost; it is the unbelievers who are baptized with fire.

That's why John is saying, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And when you look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10, the Bible says, "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." So we have been delivered from God's wrath, from God's judgment. In that sense of the word, real genuine believers are impervious to the fire and to the judgment and to the wrath of God.

Since these giant sequoias are impervious to fire, and the fire cannot kill them, how does it help them? The answer is very simple. The fire clears the forest floor of all the vegetation and all the trash, producing ash; the heat opens the cones of the sequoia, and all the seed then falls on that freshly cleared ground. The fire actually helps them to reproduce. Without the fire, they would not be reproducing.

The early church faced great persecution and it multiplied. The truth of the matter is this: persecution does not destroy Christians. Neither does it destroy Christianity. It is always a means of reproduction. Notice Acts chapter 8, verse 1: "And Saul was consenting unto his death"—that is the death of Stephen, the first martyr. "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem." What happened?

"And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." They said, "We'll take care of this problem. We will persecute them." They persecuted the Christians, and all they did was scatter them. Now watch what happens. Verse 2: "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."

What did persecution do in Acts chapter 8? It scattered the people so they would have a greater influence and preach the Word to others. In Acts chapter 12, Herod had already beheaded James, arrested Peter, and intended to murder Peter. But the angel opened the door, and Peter escaped from Herod. In this passage, God killed Herod. In fact, verse 21 says, "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Here is verse 24: "But the word of God grew and multiplied." James had been beheaded and Peter had been arrested, but the Word of God grew and multiplied.

Lessons from Giant Sequoias: Continuous Growth

The third truth that Rush pointed out to me was that these sequoias are fire resistant, and the fire actually helps them to reproduce. The fourth truth was very emphatic in my mind: the sequoias never stop growing until they die. Some of these trees are as high as a 26-story building. The only reason they do not get any higher is that lightning

will knock the tops out of them. It does not kill them, but it stops them from growing taller. They continue to grow; if they cannot grow up, they grow out.

Christians are never to stop growing. The Bible tells us in the book of Romans chapter 1 that "the just shall live by faith." Yes, but the Bible also says that we go from faith to faith. We should be stronger in our faith tomorrow than we are today, and stronger next week than we are this week. The Apostle Paul said it like this in 2 Thessalonians 1 and verse 3: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

Now notice what he said: Your faith groweth exceedingly and your charity abounds. In other words, you have not stopped growing. One of my favorite passages is found in 2 Peter 3 and verse 18. Let me explain it. I have done so before here, but in light of this let me say it again. 2 Peter 3 and verse 18, the Bible says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." So Peter says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The little word "and" in the Greek is the little word kai, K-A-I. Kai is translated in our Bibles not only as "and," but it is also translated a large number of times as "even." So you could actually read 2 Peter 3 and verse 18 like this: "But grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." No one is really growing in grace unless they are growing in knowledge. Therefore, we should be growing in knowledge of our Lord and His Word more and more. We should be increasing in knowledge. We should be increasing in grace. We should be increasing in obedience. We should be increasing in holiness. We should be increasing in submission. We should be growing until we die, just like these sequoia trees. They keep growing until they die.

Learning from Creation

Before we get to the very first passage in Psalm 92, I want to give you something else. As you read the Bible, you will find that oftentimes God commands us to go not only to creation but to His creatures,

that we might learn. Everyone is familiar with a couple of these passages. For instance, Psalm 19, verses 1 through 3: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech.” In other words, every day you ought to be able to look at God’s creation and learn something from it. At night, when you see the sun and the moon, it is uttering knowledge. “There’s no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” It does not matter if you are in the northern hemisphere or the southern hemisphere; it does not matter where you are, the heavens still declare the glory of God. There are things that we can learn from His creation.

When you get to the book of Romans, chapter 1 and verse 20, the Bible says, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” The Bible tells us that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen. In other words, creation is designed to give us what you and I would call a general or a natural revelation concerning God. When we look at God’s creation, we should be learning and considering what creation is teaching us.

Job teaches the same truth: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.” Isn’t that interesting? The beasts are to teach us. What can a beast teach us? It is interesting how God talks about beasts in the Bible.

For instance, when you get to Isaiah 1, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.” Then He says, “But my people doth not know, they do not consider.” In other words, there is something that you can learn from even dumb animals. He said, “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee.”

Obviously, the beast cannot speak, or at least cannot speak English. But Alice can tell you, “I talk to my animals all the time.” She talks to her dogs, cows, and horses. She does not expect them to answer, but I have asked Bedford and Claiborne many times, those two male dogs of mine, “Do you know who your creator is?” They are not going to answer me, and I understand that. But there is a nature in those animals that God created. Even coming down here today, I said to Bedford, “I just wish I knew what you knew. I’d like to know how much you really know.” Wouldn’t that be fun, if you could find out what an animal knows? That is the beast.

I’ll tell you one—you won’t believe this, but I’ve got the man. When my old bull General Beauregard got sick, he started losing weight. He weighed three thousand pounds and lost four or five hundred pounds. I called the vet. Beauregard was staying by himself. When the vet came, I said, “If you have to give him a shot, let me give it to him, because I can put my hands all over him. Then you can come up and check him out.”

We walked down to where the bull was lying, and the vet looked at him from ten or fifteen feet away. He said, “I don’t have to give him a shot. I can tell you right now what the problem is. It’s cancer. The reason he’s staying by himself is he’s hurting and he doesn’t want to be around other animals.” I asked, “What can I do?” He said, “You can’t do anything other than put him down. That’s all you can do. He’s going to die.”

After the vet left, I walked back down to where Beauregard was lying and stood about six feet from him. I said, “Beauregard, I know you don’t understand a word I’m saying to you, but the vet said you had cancer. The vet said the only thing I could do is put you to sleep. But I’m not going to do that. You’ve been a good bull, and I love you, and you’re a friend.”

I told him, “As long as you can live, and eat and drink, you can stay here. When you get down and you can’t come to food, I’ll bring it to you.” And I did, for about six or eight months before he died. But I also told him, “I am not going to put you to sleep. I’m not going to do that.”

The Lord is my witness: that bull got up, came to me, put his nose on my foot, smelled me all the way up, and stopped right there so I could pet him as I normally did. The hair on my neck stood up. I know that bull did not understand English, yet he understood something. I don't know. All he was saying was, "You ask the beast; they will teach you. Ask the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee. And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee."

How about Proverbs 6:6? "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." Are we to learn from ants? The answer is yes: how they provide for themselves in the summer so they will have during the winter; how they help each other, work together, and cooperate. God is saying that we can learn from creation.

The reason I gave you Psalm 92 is very simple: it consists of fifteen verses, and I want to work my way through it. As you can readily see, this psalm is about creation. It is also a psalm, or song, of the Sabbath. The title in my Bible says, "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day." Thus Psalm 92 was sung in the tabernacle and temple on the Sabbath day.

Exposition of Psalm 92:1-5

Martin Geier said, "The songs which the Levites formerly sang in the sanctuary are these: on the first day they sang Psalm 24:1-10; on the second day, Psalm 48:1-14; on the third day, Psalm 82:1-8; on the fourth day, Psalm 104:1-35; on the fifth day, Psalm 81:1-16; on the sixth day, Psalm 93:1-5." On the seventh day, they sang Psalm 92:1-15.

Psalm 92 is a Psalm of the Sabbath. It also refers to that future Sabbath where we will rest in Him. Our Creator, the Bible says, rested on the seventh day—not that He was tired, but He ceased His works on the Sabbath day. So we are to rejoice in God's creation Sabbath, but we are also to rejoice in the New Testament Sabbath. There is the old creation, and there is the new creation. You remember the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Then, in Galatians 6:15, he said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor

uncircumcision, but a new creature." In each instance, the word "creature" is the word "creation." We are a new creation in Jesus Christ. So we are celebrating not just the old creation, but the new creation as well.

Look in Psalm 92, beginning with verses 1 and 2. We will get through verse 5 today, but notice these verses: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord"—I will explain that momentarily—"and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High." Most of us cannot sing. I would probably be embarrassed to sing a solo in front of everyone because I cannot carry a tune in a bucket. I said that one time, and one lady said, "You can carry it, you just can't dump it." Whatever the case, I cannot dump it, and I cannot carry it. Yet he said, "It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord and sing praises."

Then he said, "To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." What kind of lovingkindness can we show forth in the morning—or that God shows us? He allowed us to live through the night. Then he says, "And thy faithfulness every night." What does that mean? He has allowed us to live through the day.

Spurgeon said of these two verses, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.” It is good ethically, for it is the Lord’s right; good emotionally, for it is pleasant to the heart; and good practically, for it leads others to render the same homage. When duty and pleasure combine, who will go backward? To give thanks to God is but a small return for the great benefits wherewith He daily loadeth us. Yet as He by His Spirit calls it a good thing, we must not despise or neglect it.

We thank men when they oblige us. How much more ought we to bless the Lord when He benefits us? Devout praise is always good. It is never out of season or superfluous, but is especially suitable on the Sabbath. A Sabbath without thanksgiving is a Sabbath profaned.

“To give thanks to God is but a small return for the great benefits that He has bestowed upon us.” I could not read Spurgeon’s quote without thinking of Psalm 103:1-5. David says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

David says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord with all that is within me.” And what? “And forget not all his benefits.” What are they? He forgives all our iniquities, heals all our diseases, and redeems our life from destruction. None of us know how many times God has saved and spared us. He crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. He has allowed us to live, given us family and friends, and supplied our needs. “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things”—even M&Ms and chocolate. “So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” In other words, He strengthens us and allows us to enjoy everything.

Spurgeon is right when he said, "It is but a small return to thank God for His multitudinous benefits that He gives to us." Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." The interesting thing is that Psalm 92:1-2 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, to sing praises unto thy name, O most High, to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." In other words, this is a cycle. God does this daily for us, and we ought to be aware of everything that He is doing and give Him thanks.

Verse 3 is David's determination to praise the Lord upon musical instruments: "Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery, upon the harp with a solemn sound." David was a musician. He could play, he could sing, and he wrote the Psalms, at least most of them. There is nothing wrong with singing to the Lord and playing to the Lord even if you cannot sing. You might want to do it by yourself out in the woods or in the shower, but there is nothing wrong with it. That is all David is saying.

In verses 4 and 5, he says, "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work"—singular—"I will triumph in the works of thy hands"—plural. "O Lord, how great are thy works"—plural—"and thy thoughts are very deep." Before expounding and explaining that, let me give you a quick quote by David Dickson. On verse 4 he said, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work." One part of the well-spent Sabbath is looking upon and considering the works of creation. The consideration of the Lord's works will afford us much sweet refreshment and joy when God blesses the meditation. When it is so, we ought to acknowledge our gladness most thankfully and lift up our heart in His ways.

He is talking about celebrating God's creation. In Psalm 102, verse 25, David said, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth.” Then he said, “And the heavens are the work of thy hands.” When you look at creation, think about the foundations of the earth that God has laid, and think about the Scripture: “He hangeth the world upon nothing.” Think about the heavens being the work of His hands. David said in Psalm 143, verse 5, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.” In other words, I meditate and think on the works of Thy hands.

Have you ever just looked at a tree? I see trees all the time. There are times when I am sitting in a tree stand that I just start thanking God for trees. Stop and think about all the benefits we have from those trees and the beauties presented to us through the leaves. I took two pictures this week of maple trees in our yard—unbelievable. Even those little hickory trees turn yellow, then gold, and then brown.

This is musing on the works of creation. However, there is another thought. In Psalm 92, verse 4, he said, “For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.” David said the Lord had made him glad through His work, and that he was going to triumph in the works of God's hands. When we talk about God's works, we normally summarize them through creation, redemption, and providence.

Now notice Psalm 28, verse 5. David is talking about the wicked whom God is going to destroy. Verse 3 shows that the wicked are in the context: “Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the

workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts."

"Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert." In other words, give them exactly what they deserve; give them justice. Then he tells another reason: "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up."

Isn't that interesting? Because they regard not the works of the Lord. David said, "I'm going to triumph in thy work. I'm going to rejoice in thy works." Now he says in verse 5 that these people do not even regard the operation of God's hands. What is the operation of God's hands? If you look in the book of Colossians, chapter 2 and verse 12, you will find out. In fact, we can read verse 11: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

So the operation of God is when God redeems us, when God regenerates us, and when God saves us. He is telling us that the very power God exerted in raising Jesus Christ from the dead, He exerted that same power in saving us. That is the operation of God's hands. David said God is going to destroy the wicked because they regard not the operation of His hands.

So this Psalm, Psalm 92, is not only rejoicing in the first creation; it is also rejoicing in the second creation in Jesus Christ. Now look in Psalm 92, verse 5. He says, "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep."

David in Psalm 8—and if you have never read Psalm 8, or have not read it recently, I would encourage you to do so—says in verse 3: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained." Notice again: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained." If you read Psalm 8, you will find a mention of

the paths of the seas. You may not have ever heard of Matthew Fontaine Maury, known as the pathfinder of the seas and the father of oceanography. He was a Christian, and he was reading Psalm 8. He said, "If God says that there are paths in the sea, then there are paths in the sea."

Matthew Fontaine Maury came up with the ocean currents and discovered how ships could use them to travel far faster than anything had gone before. It was all because he believed the Bible. Maury, also a Confederate soldier, has a huge statue in Richmond, Virginia, and is known as the father of oceanography. He developed some of the most noted studies in that science simply by reading and meditating upon Psalm 8. So David said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers."

Isaiah 28:29 says, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Romans 11:33–34 declares, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" No wonder David said in Psalm 92:5, "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." Psalm 14:5 also speaks of God's wonderful works and the multitudinous thoughts He has toward us.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, "The Lord's plans are as marvelous as his acts. His designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it is unsearchable. Some men think, but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought. In the eternal, the conception and the execution go together."

Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originated are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planted it are infinite. Man is superficial and shallow; God is inscrutable and deep. Dive as we may, we shall never fathom the mysterious plan or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all-comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth of thy wisdom and thy judgments." Yet our inability to know God perfectly does not mean that we should

content ourselves with knowing nothing. We have to consider His creation. God commanded us to ask the beasts, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the earth.

This is not New Age. I'm just simply saying that God has said that there are certain things that we can learn from His creation if we will consider it, think about it, and meditate upon it. You should look at trees differently by the time I finish the next two messages than you do now. You should look at animals differently. Sometimes you're going to find those dumb animals are not quite as dumb as we make them out to be, and sometimes we are the dumber of the animals. It's amazing. The trees of the Lord, the Scripture says, are full of sap. What does that mean? We're going to find out, Lord willing, as we look at those trees that God has planted.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace and your mercy and your goodness and your kindness. We ask, Lord, that you would teach us. Help us, Lord, to learn not just from creation and the animals and the insects, but help us, Lord, from thy word, thy truth, thy special revelation. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Trees Of The Lord

Part Two of Three

Psalm 92, beginning with verse 1: “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High, to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings and upon the psaltery, upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work. I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep.

“A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever. But thou, Lord, art most high forevermore. For lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for lo, thine enemies shall perish. All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn.

“I shall be anointed with fresh oil. Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. The righteous shall flourish like the

palm tree. He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock. There is no unrighteousness in him."

Introduction and Review

This is the second in the series on the trees of the Lord. In the first message, I dealt basically with Psalm 92, verses 1 through 5. I also told about my visit with Rush Dooney years ago, when he took me to visit those giant sequoias and then stood and talked for an hour about how Christians are compared to those sequoias. The Bible compares Christians to palm trees and cedar trees in Psalm 92, to willow trees in Isaiah, and to myrtle trees in Zechariah. There is a lot to learn concerning trees here. Psalm 92 is a psalm of creation, and its first five verses demonstrate how we are to rejoice in God our Creator. Psalm 92 was also a psalm sung on the Sabbath day.

I quoted Martin Geier, and I'm going to quote him again, and he said this: "The songs which the Levites formerly sang in the sanctuary are these. On the first day, they sang Psalm 24, verses 1-10. On the second, Psalm 48, verses 1-14. On the third, Psalm 82, verses 1-8. On the fourth, Psalm 104, verses 1-35. On the fifth, Psalm 81."

"...verses 1-16. On the sixth, Psalm 93, verses 1-5. And then on the Sabbath day, they would sing Psalm 92, verses 1-15." I pointed out how that this is a psalm that celebrates the work of God's hands. If you will look again in verses 4 and 5, and David said, "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work"—singular—"I will triumph in the works of thy hands." And then he says, "O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep." I pointed out last week that—and I would also point it out again this week—if you would look at Psalm 28, verse 5, and then we want to look very quickly at Colossians chapter 2, but in Psalm 28, verse 5—in fact, we will read verse 4—just to demonstrate that David is here dealing with

The Work of God's Hands

the wicked, and he makes an astounding statement. In Psalm 28, notice if you would please verse 4, David says, "Give them according to their deeds and according to the wickedness of their endeavors. Give them after the work of their hands. Render to them their desert." That is the wicked. Here's one: "Because they regard not the works of the Lord"—and remember the works of the Lord were summarized with creation, redemption, and providence—he says, "because they regard not the works of the Lord," and then he says, "nor, neither, the operation of his hands." And this reason

"he shall destroy them and not build them up." So you would have to ask, what is the operation of his hands? And if you will look in the book of Colossians chapter 2, he will tell you that. Colossians chapter 2, and notice if you would please there, verse 12. In fact, let's read verse 11. He says, "...in whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead." So the operation of God deals with not only the resurrection, but it also deals with salvation as well. So the work of his hands is indeed very important, not just in creation but in redemption and providence as well.

As we progress through this psalm, we see that David is rejoicing in God's creation. He compares trees to the saints of God. Having finished verse 5, we begin with verse 6, where he makes this astounding statement: "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." What David tells us and demonstrates is something that neither a brutish man nor a fool will ever understand.

A brutish man is a man who does not think, consider, or meditate. Like an animal, a brutish man moves by instincts and feelings. That which separates humans from animals is our reasoning ability and our ability to think. He does not use that ability to consider or meditate upon what God has made and what God has said.

The Brutish Man and the Fool

A fool in the Bible is not a mentally deficient person. A fool is someone who will not listen, learn, or be taught, and who will never change his ways. Thus David says in Psalm 92:6, "A brutish man knoweth not that, and a fool doth not understand this." Scripture repeatedly deals with both the brutish man and the fool.

Psalm 49:12 says, "Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not," that is, he does not continue in his honor; "he is like the beasts that perish." Then, in verse 20: "Man that is in honor and understandeth not," that is, he has no understanding, "is like the beasts that perish." David is speaking of the brutish man and also of a fool: a man may be in honor, but without understanding he does not remain there and is like the beasts that perish.

Psalm 94:8 asks, "Understand, you brutish among the people, and you fools, when will you be wise?" Again, a brutish man is someone who will not understand, and a fool is someone who will not be taught. That is why Peter said in 2 Peter 2:12, "But these, as natural brute beasts, are made to be taken and destroyed."

“They speak evil of things which they understand not and they shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” So again he talks about individuals who claim to be wise and yet are nothing more than brute beasts, and they speak evil of things they understand not. We are going to look at this passage a little bit later, but even godly Asaph, who was a Levitical singer, when he was envious at the wicked said in Psalm 73 and verse 22, “So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.”

You need to stop and ask yourself this question: How is it that a Christian can be as a beast before God? That is what Asaph said: “I was as a beast before thee.” Now, listen very carefully. Proverbs 1, verse 7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Everybody can quote the beginning of this verse, but the rest of the verse says, “but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” So the man who will not listen, the man who will not learn, the man who will not heed, God calls him a fool.

Let me say it again. In the Bible, a fool is not someone who is mentally challenged or mentally disabled. A fool is someone who

refuses to listen and learn. Proverbs 1, verse 22, asks, “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? And scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.” You cannot teach a fool anything; he refuses to listen. Now look back to Psalm 92, verse 6: “A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this.”

What David is about to do in verses 7 through 11 is reveal a truth that brutish men and fools will not understand or grasp. It is just that simple. He is going to compare the wicked to the just. He will tell us how the just, those who are saved by grace through faith, are like unto trees, and show how the wicked are like unto grass. Spurgeon said it like this. In fact, before quoting Spurgeon, look at verse 7. After he tells us that a brutish man is not going to understand this and a fool is not going to grasp this, verse 7 says, “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever.”

The Wicked as Grass

Then, in verse 9: “For lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for lo, thine enemies shall perish. All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.” Spurgeon says:

“In this and the following verses, the effect of the psalm is heightened by contrasts. The shadows are thrown in to bring out the light more prominently. What a stoop from the preceding verse, from the saint to the brute, from the worshiper to the boar, from the psalmist to the fool.

“Yet, alas, the character described here is not an uncommon one. The boarish man, for such is almost the very Hebrew word, sees nothing in nature. And if it be pointed out to him, his foolish mind will not comprehend it.

“He may be a philosopher, yet such a one is a brutish being that he will not even own the existence of a maker for the ten thousand matchless creations around him, which wear, even upon their surface, the evidence of profound design. The unbelieving heart, let it boast as it will, does not know. And with all its parade of intellect, it does not understand. A man must either be a saint or a brute.

"He has no other choice. His type must be the adoring seraph or the ungrateful swine. So far from paying respect to great thinkers who will not own the glory or the being of God, we ought to regard them as comparable to the beasts which perish, only vastly lower than mere brutes, because their degrading condition is of their own choosing. O God, how sorrowful a thing it is that men whom thou hast so largely gifted and made in thine own image should so brutify themselves that they will neither see nor understand what thou hast made so clear."

Then he makes his last comment: "Well might an eccentric writer say, 'God made man a little lower than the angels at first, and he, man, has been trying to get lower since.'"

I think that is very accurate. Notice what he said about philosophers and great intellects who refuse to acknowledge God. Think of Stephen Hawking. No doubt he had an intellect, but he denied God and denied creation. What Spurgeon is saying is that, instead of regarding these men as great minds, we should regard them as mere brutes because they have no reasoning ability when it comes to the things of God.

In Psalm 92, when David says in verse 6, "A brutish man doth not, neither doth a fool understand this," he gives a strong contrast between the righteous and the wicked. He demonstrates that the wicked are as grass, while the righteous are as trees. In verses 7–11 he compares the wicked to grass, and in verses 12–15 he compares the righteous to trees.

In one sense, we are all like grass: our time is short, and we wither and die. But there is a large difference between natural frailty and the judgment of God. From the day you are born, you begin to die.

All Flesh is Grass

I do not care if you live to be 120 or 320; the time is relatively short, and the older you get, the quicker time goes by. That is simply the way it is. Look in your Bibles at Isaiah 40 and 1 Peter chapter 1, because Peter quotes from Isaiah 40. In this passage, Isaiah shows that all flesh is as grass. We are all frail, and we are all going to die. Isaiah 40, beginning with verse 6, says, "The voice said, Cry. And he

said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand forever." Compare this with 1 Peter chapter 1, where Peter quotes from Isaiah 40.

Peter is quoting from Isaiah, and he makes the same statement: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Now, I do not care how handsome a young man is. Give him fifty to sixty years. I do not care how beautiful a young girl is; give her fifty or sixty years. I do not care how many muscles you have. Wait fifty or sixty years, and those muscles are going to sag. That is all there is to it. We are as grass: we wither, the flower fades, and it falls off. It is just that simple.

However, when you get back to Psalm 92, it is not mere human frailty that is being discussed. It is the judgment of God. Look in verse 7 from Psalm 92 again. This is what the brutish man nor the fool will understand: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever." In other words, the wicked may seemingly prosper and may be in positions of power, but they are going to be destroyed.

Now, hold Psalm 92 and look in your Bibles to Psalm 37, because there is a problem that I want not only to illustrate but to try to give you a solution to as well. So many times the righteous fret over what the wicked possess, and so many times the righteous envy the wicked: They do what they want to, go where they want to go, and have what they want to have. I cannot do all of that. In Psalm 37, verses 1 and 2, look what God says: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Why? For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the

The Problem of Envying the Wicked

"green herb." In Psalm 37, verse 35, David said, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not. Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." In verse 38 he says, "But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

Psalm 90, verses 5 and 6, says, "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth." That is a short period of time, from morning to evening. God takes them away as a flood, as a sleep, like grass.

Psalm 129, verses 5 through 7, says, "Let them all be confounded and turn back that hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up, wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom." If you hate God and His people and His wall and His kingdom, let them be as this grass.

Most of us have seen sod roofs. Sometimes there is an entire sod house. Grass may grow up through a sod roof, but the sod is very limited, and the grass cannot really grow or possess deep roots. The sun comes out, it withers and dies. The man who mows or harvests grass can get nothing from it because it cannot remain long enough to produce.

Spurgeon said, speaking about Psalm 92, "He points out and exposes by striking an appropriate figure the folly of imagining that the wicked obtain a triumph over God, when He does not, it may be, immediately bring them under restraint." Many people think that because God does not instantly smite the wicked, or does not restrain them right away, they are getting a victory over God. Speaking of Psalm 92, verse 7, he says, "He makes an admission so far, He grants that they spring up and flourish, but adds immediately by way of qualification that they flourish like the grass only for a moment, their prosperity being brief."

In this way he removes what has been almost a universal stumbling block or ground of offense, for it would be ridiculous to

envy the happiness of men who are doomed to be speedily destroyed, of whom it may be said that today they may flourish and tomorrow they may be cut down.

I read this week that George Soros has eighteen billion dollars. I cannot even imagine eighteen billion dollars. Would you, as a Christian, be willing to trade your place in the kingdom of God for George Soros, simply to have eighteen billion dollars? I would not. I do not care what he has. He could have one hundred eighteen billion dollars; I do not want it. I would rather have the Lord Jesus Christ, and I would rather be saved. I would rather have His grace and mercy than receive one hundred eighteen billion dollars and live three hundred years. What is that? I am still going to die and face the judgment of God.

One of the problems we face is very simple. A lot of Christians stumble over the fact that the wicked are often in great power, have high positions, and have an awful lot of money. Look at the Clinton Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and all of these people whom you and I know to be absolutely as corrupt as they can be, yet they have more money than you and I could ever even think of.

Asaph's Struggle and Solution

Think about the churches that deny the inspiration of Scripture and deny the person and work of Jesus Christ, yet have huge buildings and money coming out of their ears. Then you have one little struggling group of twenty or thirty people who really believe the Bible, really love the Lord, and really want to teach the truth, but can hardly pay the light bill. Why is that?

Alice and I, when we go north on 75, see, outside Atlanta on the right-hand side, a humongous church building. It is huge. I have often said jokingly as we passed it, “I sure would like to have one Federal Reserve note for each brick in that building.” I have no idea how many bricks there are, but if I had one Federal Reserve note for each brick, it would be more money than I could spend in a number of years. The sad thing is that the building is probably used only on Sunday morning. One of the problems Christians have is that they often envy the wicked, and it causes them to fret and be disturbed.

Asaph was a godly man. He was a Levite and a Levitical singer. He is the one who wrote Psalm 73. Look at it: a psalm of Asaph. You will find that he is mentioned in the Bible a number of times. Look at his problem in Psalm 73. In verse 1 he says, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." So he makes that statement: Yes, God is good. Then he says, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped."

In other words, he nearly fell and broke his neck. It nearly got him. So what was it that nearly slew Asaph? Verse 3: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

Now he describes some of the prosperous things that happen to the wicked. He says, "For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm." In other words, they have good health right up to the end. They do not really suffer. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." They do not have the problems we have. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment." Then, "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish."

If I had a million dollars, what would I do with it? There is nothing that I particularly would want a million dollars for. But they have more than their heart could wish, and certainly they do. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily." They are arrogant, proud, heady, and high-minded. They are also blasphemous: "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth."

They could care less whether they curse God or man. "Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say"—this is wicked now—"How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" Now he identifies them: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

Asaph nearly stumbled and fell and broke his neck. He said, “Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.”

After he looked at the wicked and saw how they prospered and all that they had, he said, “Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain. I have washed my hands in innocency.” In other words, all day long I have been chastened since I believed in the Lord and followed His law. All I have received is trouble, heartache, and poverty. “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” Lord, how is it? I am here serving You, wanting to honor You, doing without, suffering, and troubled all the time. Just look at the wicked. They never go through what I am going through, and they have everything.

Here is the solution: “Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.”

“Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.” Asaph said, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful, until I went into the sanctuary of God, and I understood their end. Lord, you put them in slippery places. Their foot is going to slide in due time. You are going to cast them down. They will be cast down into desolation as in a moment. They will be utterly consumed with terrors, and thou shalt despise their image.”

Would you be willing to trade places with a man like that for a few million bucks? Not I. Not I. Asaph’s problem was that he was envious of the wicked. He did not understand that when the wicked spring forth as the grass, it is that they may be cut down forever. Hengstenberg said, “The annihilation of the wicked comes into notice here as the basis of the deliverance of the righteous, which is the proper theme of this song.”

God's Sovereignty and Judgment

Nothing of God can stand, whether skill, riches, honor, or power. It rises and flourishes, but in the end it is only a thistle bush and a noxious weed, good for nothing but fire.

Spurgeon wrote: “They grow to die. They blossom to be blasted. They flower briefly to wither without fruit. Greatness and glory are to them but the prelude of their own overthrow.”

Little does their opposition to the Lord matter, even if they have blasphemed Him. It is as if He is a mount and abides the same though the meadows at His feet bloom or wither. Even so, the Most High is unaffected by the fleeting mortals who dare oppose Him. They shall soon vanish forever from among the living. But as for the wicked, how can our minds endure the contemplation of their doom forever? Destruction forever is a portion far too terrible for the mind to realize.

"I have not seen nor ear heard the full terror of the wrath to come." Zachary Bogan said, "Little do they think that they are suffered to prosper, that like beast, they may be the fitter for the slaughter. The fatter they are, the fitter for the slaughter and the sooner slain." Then he quotes Psalm 78, verse 11: "He slew the fattest of them."

We need to understand something. Just because a man does not suffer, has more money than he can shake a stick at, and everything goes right for him does not mean that God approves of him. Just because a man is poor and suffers, and is always in adverse circumstances, does not mean that God disapproves of him.

God's approbation and disapprobation are not based upon our condition in life. Great prosperity is oftentimes the forerunner of great destruction. The Puritans used to say it like this: "God often curses His enemies with riches." How can that be a curse? Most of the time, the wicked end up trusting in their riches, wealth, position, and power, and not in God. Psalm 49 says, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him," and they cannot even do that for themselves, much less someone else. "For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever, that he should still live forever, and not see corruption. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their

own names." Notice what he says: "and they leave their wealth to others."

I read years ago about an extremely wealthy man who died. The pallbearers were carrying the casket to the gravesite, and one of them leaned over and whispered to another, “How much did he leave?” The other responded, “He left it all.” And that is true. He left it all. There was nothing there.

Psalm 62:10 says, “Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” If riches increase, set not your heart upon them. Our Lord said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.” If our money is our treasure, if our wealth is our treasure, that is exactly where our hearts are going to be as well.

First Timothy 6:17 gives the epitome of the answer, the epitome of the solution: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Do you note and understand that all riches are uncertain riches? Stop and think about the multi-millionaires in 1929 who went to bed multi-millionaires, woke up broke, and were jumping out windows, committing suicide because they lost everything. Think of the people who had their money in the stock market: when it goes, it is gone. Think of the people who have all their wealth in electronic digits. All of this is uncertain riches. God said we had better make sure that none of us trust in uncertain riches, but rather trust in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Now do you understand why David said a brutish man will not understand this, neither will a fool? Why Peter again said, “But as natural brute beasts, as natural brute beasts they are made to be taken and destroyed”? Because they speak evil of things they do not understand. Usually wealthy people, extremely wealthy people, get that way and continue to stay in that way by cheating others and by stealing from others. Look in James 5, beginning verse 1. God

James says, “Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and

the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of your laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth. And the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

"You have lived in pleasure on earth, and been wanton. You have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." He goes on to tell what else they have done. Notice the fraud, the theft, and what God says: They have lived in pleasure on the earth, been wanton, and nourished their hearts as in a day of slaughter. They have just fattened themselves for judgment.

Now go back in your Bibles to Psalm 92. David says in verse 6, "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." What he does not understand is that "when the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever." They are springing forth and flourishing, but it is only for a moment. Then he says in verse 8, "But thou, Lord, art most high forevermore." God is most high forevermore because He maintains His position as the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth, and His righteous judgments will be exercised upon the wicked. He remains in the high and exalted position that He occupies. Psalm 47:8 says, "God reigneth over the heathen. God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness."

The wicked may not acknowledge Him; they may despise and blaspheme Him, but that does not matter. He still reigns over them and maintains His high, exalted position. Consider Isaiah chapter 40, verse 22. The Bible says, "It is He"—read verse 21; we are talking about God—"Have you not known? Have you not heard?"

Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He—that is God—that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Notice that the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. If you were afraid of a grasshopper, all you have to do is step on him. As we say in South Georgia, he is squished or squashed or mashed. He's gone.

Here is the sovereign God, saying that the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers. Do you realize that if every wicked man who has lived, is living, and shall live united with all of the demons out of hell, it would not affect God at all? It would not cause Him any uneasiness, because they are nothing but grasshoppers. Just step on them. That's all.

You remember in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is driven insane for seven years. He eats grass like an ox; his hair grows like bird feathers, and his fingernails like bird claws. At the end of the seven years, his understanding returns, and he says: "At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me. And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him who liveth forever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?"

So we have gone from grasshoppers to nothing. God maintains His position. God is sovereign over the wicked, and God will judge the wicked. Charles Spurgeon said it like this: "God is at once the highest and the most enduring of all beings. Others rise to fall. But He is the Most High to eternity. Glory be to His name! How great a God we worship! Who would not fear Thee, O Thou High Eternal One? The ungodly are destroyed forever, and God is Most High forever. Evil is cast down, and the Holy One reigns supremely, eternally."

And that certainly is true. You have to understand something. A lot of people get depressed and discouraged very easily, and they will say, "Well, look at it."

Christianity is now being despised, and Christians are being persecuted in the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have genuinely deteriorated in this country. You can put a man in prison for making a salve, selling raw milk, or feeding the homeless without permission. We have gone a long way. But no matter how low we go, God is still on the throne.

The Bible says that His strength is made perfect in weakness. God will inevitably find a weak individual whom He will empower and raise up to overthrow the wicked and the ungodly and establish again His rule and His law. God is the Most High. None can overthrow Him, hinder Him, thwart Him, or stop Him. He is God.

The Righteous Exalted

Look back to Psalm 92, verses 9 through 11: "For lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for lo, thine enemies shall perish. All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered." Here is a contrast: "But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil." There is a difference between believers and unbelievers. Then verse 11 says, "Mine eye also shall see my desire upon mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire upon the wicked that rise up against me."

These three verses illustrate and explain how high the Lord really is. He is capable of abasing those who are high, proud, arrogant, and wicked, and of raising up the poor and needy. The Bible says that He lifted up the poor and needy out of the dunghill. He takes us from the lowliest, stinkiest place and places us on high; He takes those who are high and puts them down in the dunghill. David said, "Mine eyes shall see my desire upon mine enemies, mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me." God shall overthrow them. And what will God do for David?

He said, "But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn," that is, I am going to be placed on high. "I shall be anointed with fresh oil." God will rejuvenate me, renew me, revive me, and give us victory in time and in history as well as eternity. Jesus Christ has already won the victory. That is why the Bible says we are already more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We are not the losers; we are the winners. We are not the victims; we are the victors. We are not the conquered; we are the conquerors. No matter how bad it looks, God is always sovereign, and God is always on the throne.

This is what the brutish man will not know and what the fool will not understand: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever." Let that sink in.

Illustration and Conclusion

Years ago, when my father was alive, he had a back pasture that had not really been used for years. He decided that he wanted to make a field out of it. The pasture had grown up in old, tall sage grass—sage straw, thick. I was home, and he asked, “Would you help me burn that field off?” I said, “Yes, I will.”

When we got ready to burn the field, the wind was blowing this way. It was not a strong wind, but it was blowing this way. I told Dad, “Before you set a fire up here with the wind, let me go to the other end. I am going to set a fire against the wind, and I will back-burn about fifty yards or better. When it does come this way, it is not going to jump into the woods.” He said, “That is fine.” I told him I would wave when I was ready for him to light the fire. I burned back fifty yards, seventy-five, and waved for him to set the fire. If you have ever burned a field off, you understand that fire creates its own wind. He set that straw on fire, and it was like—and I looked, and the only way

The only way I could get out of that field was to jump over the fire I had set and get into the place that had already been burned. It was almost instantaneous, and yet it was thirty or forty acres. Just whoosh—and it was gone. “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever.”

When God sends His judgment, it will be instantaneous, complete, and total. We need to understand that there is no way on God’s green earth that we could envy the wicked, desire to be with them, or desire to have what they have. Their feet are placed in slippery places; their destruction shall come upon them in a moment, and terrors will utterly consume them. God shall despise their image forever. The wicked are compared to grass; the righteous are compared to trees.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and mercy. Help us understand that which David is showing and teaching us: how the wicked, when they spring as the grass, shall be destroyed forever. Help us to honor You, love You, serve You, praise You, and thank You for Your so great salvation. May we love You

with all our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, amen.

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