

Develop Tap Roots in Christ

By

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(Sabbath School Sermon)

Saturday, 24th March, 2018

Key text: Psalm 92:12-15

A Worthier Investment

Many are chasing after the pleasures and riches of this world thinking that those are the things in which they will find happiness and fulfilment in life. At best, they are mere sops to the human spirit. They provide an illusion of satisfaction titillating the flesh but leaving the soul dry and empty. It's about beautiful buildings, the latest cars, worldly wealth, womanizing, partying and social status. And the time and effort spent acquiring them appear worth it.

But the wise king Solomon took it all down a peg or two. It's all chasing after the wind – “vanity of vanities all is vanity”!

But you could make a worthier investment. You could devote more time and effort to strengthening your relationship with the Lord and immersing yourself more and more in His words of life. In accordance with the principle of cause and effect, this has its rewards that have been decreed by Yehovah:

*“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon”
(Ps. 92:12).*

This is the assurance of the Creator of both the palm tree and the cedar, both of them evergreen, sturdy and impregnable trees. He knows the secret of their strength, value and longevity. That's what is in store for the righteous, as reiterated through the Prophet Isaiah:

“Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings” (Isa. 3:10).

There can be no other result: the righteous will enjoy the good fruit of his righteous lifestyle. It shall be well with him!

Planted in Modesty, Flourish in Glory

Before there can be growth and fruiting, there must be planting. So, of necessity, we must be planted first before we can grow into fruitfulness.

The house of God is the natural field of planting for the righteous:

“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 shew that the LORD is upright: His my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Ps. 92:13-15).

It’s about being planted in the house of God, becoming a permanent fixture there. And all the rest will follow. You will never be bare of spiritual fruitfulness.

But how is one planted in the house of God?

It’s to saturate oneself in the Word of God, meditate on it and live by it. We read in Psalm 1:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (vv. 1-3).

The alternative – the life of ungodliness – has been spurred. And so he lives a blessed life because that life is immersed in the Word. He takes pleasure in the Law of God and he meditates on it daily. That’s spiritual planting by the rivers of water of God’s Spirit (John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1, 17). In time, as determined by God, he will yield fruit and never go barren because the rivers of water never dry up! It’s an evergreen life in Christ evidenced by unbroken prosperity!

And it was all down to a life devoted to the Word:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:8).

Again, the outcome is prosperity and success. But we need to ‘free up space’ for the Word to be planted in our lives; we need to weed out unwanted weeds and thistles from our hearts so the word can have its rightful place in our hearts:

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21).

The result is that “the Word of Christ will dwell richly” in us in “all wisdom” (Col. 3:16). And the Almighty Himself will guarantee it by covenant:

“As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever” (Isa. 59:21).

It’s a firm planting by the mouth of Yahweh rooted in His Spirit-guaranteed devotion to His Word of life.

While private study of the Word needs to be done and indeed encouraged (1 Tim. 4:13, 15), let's not forget where the action should ideally take place – “the house of God”!

So study scripture on your own (2 Tim. 3:14-15), but also put a special value on the exposition of the Word by anointed preachers. That requires regular physical attendance at the house of God:

*“And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
“And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.
“And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
“And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” (Luke 4:17-22).*

The expounded Word had a profound impact on the congregation. They were enthralled by both the message and the messenger. Any person who absented themselves from the Assembly that Sabbath certainly missed the deeper riches of the prophetic word as expounded by Christ, although they might have read or been familiar with that portion of the Prophet Isaiah's scroll all along! There's a special blessing in the spoken word (*rhema*) when the Most High anoints the mind and the mouth of an individual to expound the Word:

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa. 50:4).

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8).

This is a mind and a tongue prepared by the Holy Spirit of God to speak to edify, exhort and to instruct. And the arena for the delivery of the Spirit-empowered Word is the house of God – the meeting place for God's people where He's the object and reason for the assembly. To skip the service therefore is to miss out on a vital spiritual resource for growth and vitality in Christ. Our physical presence at the assembly is a must:

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:
“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25).*

The fellowship and mutual exhortation has been designed by the Lord as a counter to the deceitfulness of the human heart which tends to turn us away from the living God:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:12-13).

The believer who regularly attends services in fellowship with other believers in the presence of God gains from both the instruction of the Word and the mutual exhortation and encouragement of the brethren. Christian fellowship through church attendance provides a great environment for the believer’s grooming in the image of Christ. (See Col. 3:9-11). It’s not about mere socializing but being equipped with the relevant spiritual tools and Christ-like qualities being the combined effect of the five-fold ministry of the body of Christ:

“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).

Attaining “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” is a tall order indeed but is not unachievable in the light of the heavenly grace that would be unleashed by the five-fold ministry. It’s not a growth which will come at once (or it can’t be called ‘growth’). It will take some time as we ingest the “milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2) fed to us by pastors and teachers in tandem with the illumination of apostles, the prophetic guidance of prophets and the stirring exhortation of evangelists. The five offices operate within the confines of the body of Christ for the building up of the whole body. They are not supposed to operate within just the sphere of the individual life of a believer, who lives in his own insular Christian world!

The stature of the fulness of Christ is attained in conjunction with others of like precious faith. That is what we mean by ‘church’:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

“For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Cor. 12:12-14).

If so, abandoning Christian fellowship in the house of God is out of the question. (See 1 Cor. 12:15-18, 25-28). We must necessarily congregate in the house of God – to be planted therein for the implantation of the Word and the graces flowing from the operations of the gifts and offices of the Spirit.

The result is spiritual ennoblement – we shall “flourish in the courts [not just house] of our God”. We will be “accepted in the beloved” as members of the royal family of God with access to the heavenly throne of grace (Eph. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 4:16, 10:19).

So then, it is a privilege to be proud of, even if one occupies the lowest position in the hierarchy of the earthly house of God, the church (see 1 Cor. 12:28). As the Psalmist says in Ps. 84, “a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (vv. 10-11).

A great place to be even as a doorkeeper! You live in the glorious presence of Adonai who is both your unfailing protector and supplier of all the ‘good things’ needed for both body and soul!

Abuse of the House of God

The presence of God is an aura of power, majesty and holiness. It is a presence that commands respect and reverence. In fact, it’s scripturally commanded that we accord the Living God all the dignity and reverence He deserves – while in His presence:

“But the LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. 2:20).

Ours is to keep silence in His presence. He must do all the talking, while we listen. We are not to talk our own things in His presence or talk back to Him. In His presence is life (Ps. 16:11), and that life is in His words (John 6:63).

But how often we tend to behave less reverently and chatter unnecessarily in the presence of the invisible God of creation! The ethics of the Kingdom impose a godly, disciplined behaviour in the house of God:

“But if I tarry long”, Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “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” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Not just any behaviour or lifestyle is acceptable in the presence of God in His house. Instead, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

The presence of God in His house of assembly and worship is a holy time that should be spent in extolling Him and getting to know Him better through the inculcation of His will by means of the Word preached.

Sadly, this holy time in the presence of God is rather misspent by many in gossip and other negative behaviour with heaven looking on with smouldering anger (Ps. 50:16-23). He describes such as “wicked” in that their hearts are not with Him but far from Him (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:9). They have merely put on an outward show of religion; they remain rebellious at heart. (See Isa. 1:10-17). They appear before the great King not to worship and listen to His words of life – not really, although they may dance and shout in praises with accompanying gesticulations. They are there just to mark time. Their hearts pull them towards certain activities of personal interest to them. They call people names, poke fun at them, dance to spite others, malign the pastor and family. Oh yea, this same pastor was a great entertainment in the pulpit today, especially when he spiced up his sermon with those few wisecracks! In their search for entertainment at the expense of everyone else, they lost the import of the message. They became hearers only, not doers wherein is the divine blessing. (Ez. 33:30-33; Jam. 1:22-25).

Now if they only hear but will not do and be reformed by the word, why won’t they be impatient with longer sermons and services? “Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?” (Amos 8:5).

While they sit in the house of God, their hearts are far from God and His Word. The spiritual detachment often breeds hostility towards the Spirit-filled pastor who preaches against all the evil desires and contents of their hearts. He's the first casualty of their verbal venom. Ostensibly, God Himself is spared, but to denigrate and falsely attack God's minister is to call into question the wisdom of God in His choice of the minister because "no man taketh this honour [of the priesthood/ministry] unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). So be careful how you treat the true ministers of God. We are to "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17).

Apart from the respect given to the ministers of God who "watch for your souls", we are to "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Php. 2:3). Such demonstration of humility towards one another is testimony that we have "the mind of Christ" (Php. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16).

That is the way to be planted in the house of Yahweh – humility to obey God giving Him due reverence as well as humility towards our fellow believer. That's the fertile soil that will ensure our quick growth and fruiting in the courts of our God. Our growth and maturity are not without rewards and promotion.

We shall flourish in the heavenly courts of our faithful God having lived in His presence in obedience and humility. Halleluia!