

A time to flourish

Opening Text: Psalms 92:1-2, 12-15

Introduction:

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree”

“To flourish” means: “to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, to thrive, to revive, to increase, to enlarge, to prosper, to abound, to expand, to spread out, to make steady progress, to be at a high point in one’s life”.

1. How do I know this is for me?

a) Your address is on it!

This blessing is addressed to you – the righteous. The New Testament calls the believer ‘righteous’. (2 Corinthians 5:21 – *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”*).

b) In this passage, to “flourish” is mentioned 3 times, in 3 verses.

“3” is important because “every word shall be established by the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses” (2 Cor. 13:1). That means that this was not an accidental use of language. No, God really meant it and it is an ‘established’ word.

For these two reasons, you can know that this your word. It is a word for us corporately in this house but also, individually to you– this is His promise to you.

2. We are compared to trees who flourish in exceptional ways

Verses 12-15: *“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing,”*

God uses natural imagery so we can understand the full extent of this blessing.

a) God compares us to trees in several passages of the Bible

Isaiah 61:3 - *To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”*

He doesn’t compare us to lifeless fence posts but to life-filled and life-giving trees!

b) God compares us to exceptional trees:

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

- God doesn't compare us with fence posts and neither with tiny Bonsai trees but with large trees like the cedar of Lebanon that can grow up to 35 meters tall and live 1000 years.
- He compares us with the palm tree – beautiful and fruitful like no other tree in the middle east. It is the most useful of all trees: it produces fruit all year long, and apart from dates, you can extract sugar, oil, resin, rope and thread, paper even, its seeds are used to feed cattle, you can extract dye from it, etc. They have an amazing root system that makes them immovable against any type of storm and they can last more than 700 years! Its fruit gets sweeter as it grows older.

God compares us to flourishing, fruitful trees. That is His vision for your life.

In **Jude 1:12b**, there is a reference to people who were “*late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;*”

That is a picture of the wicked, not of the righteous! The righteous shall flourish, do well, grow, develop, spread out!

Proverbs 14:11 - *The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish.*

V.14 says that “*they shall bear fruit in old age, they shall be fresh and flourishing.*”

The word “fresh” literally means: “full of oil”. That means full of the sap of the Holy Spirit. V.10b says “I have been anointed with fresh oil”.

That's the picture for your 2017!

In **Ezekiel 17:2** we read that God will make the dry tree to flourish!

3. How to flourish in 2017?

Is ‘flourishing’ something that will automatically drop on us or are there perhaps conditions that need to be met? With this message, we are declaring that it is the season to flourish. The winter of bareness and lifelessness is past and the season to sprout, to blossom is here. The season is right but some things need to happen. Here's how to flourish in 2017:

a) Stay committed to Jesus

John 15:5 - *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

b) Stay committed to the house of God

V.13: *Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God*”

You need to be **planted**. Environment is crucial for development. It is very important to have your root system where it can be fed.

The house of the Lord, the courts of our God is the environment of the believer – it is our element, our habitat. It provides the believer with the nutrients, the temperature, the water and sun (SON) radiance to flourish.

Psalms 52:8 - *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.*

Many are not flourishing because they are not planted or then they're planted in the wrong habitat.

Ezequiel 47:1,12 - 1 *Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.*

12 - *Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because **their water flows from the sanctuary**. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.*

Water flowing from the sanctuary – from the house of God. This same imagery is found in Revelation 22:1-2. In the house of God our root system is fed and we flourish.

The bible says that Aaron' rod, inside the Ark of the Covenant budded. The Ark was in the temple. **Numbers 17:8** says that it not only budded but blossomed and yielded almonds!

c) Stay committed to the Word

You have heard God's word for you today. So, what do you with a word like this if you want to flourish? Commit to it. Commit to the promise, commit to the conditions that go with the promise.

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 NLT ¹⁸ *“So **commit yourselves wholeheartedly** to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, **you and your children may flourish** in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors.”*

Take hold of this prophetic word. Believe it, speak it, act on it, expect it!