

GROUNDING IN ALL SEASONS

Susan Hunt, Revive '21

TEXT: PSALM 92

We're grieved and shocked by the cultural chaos, the deep darkness, and people not even knowing what causes such despair and distress (Prov. 4:19). But for the righteous the path gets brighter and brighter (Prov. 4:18) because **God's Word renews our minds and equips us to think biblically, to think beyond what is seen to the unseen, eternal realities.** Then slowly, as our hearts are transformed, we connect the eternal realities to our earthly realities, and our **theology becomes our doxology (J.I.Packer).**

We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to praise His glorious grace (Eph. 1). Our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. This profound statement answers the burning question in my heart: "Why am I here?" My purpose is to become part of the redemptive history and part of putting God's glorious grace on display in a broken world. It focuses me on the grand reality that **the gospel is big enough, good enough, and powerful enough to make every moment of every season of life glorious and significant.** Putting it into practice is shamefully and painfully slow because it is a daily battle of dying to self.

Psalm 92 shows us how to glorify and enjoy God. It crescendos with the extraordinary promise that the path of the righteous will get brighter and brighter. "The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. . . . They still bear fruit in old age" (Ps. 92:12, 14).

Jesus walked the path of righteousness all the way to the cross and gave His perfect, sinless life as the substitute and sacrifice for our sins. On the basis of His obedience, God declares us to be justified, just as if we never sinned, and just as righteous as Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to flourish? It doesn't necessarily mean doing more; it means becoming more like Jesus. As counterintuitive as it sounds, flourishing is the progressive death of self and the growth of the life of Christ in us.

Psalm 92 is a community song meant to be sung during worship. In verse one, God is revealing Himself through the name "LORD" (Yahweh) as a personal God who enters into a personal relationship, binding Himself to us in covenant love and loyalty, promising, "I will be your God, you will be my people. I will live among you; I will be with you always." "Most High" is a reminder of His transcendent sovereignty. **His sovereignty assures us that He can keep every promise, and His love assures us that He will keep every promise.**

"Steadfast love" is the Hebrew word *hesed*, a rich word full of meaning (92:2). **It means God's covenant commitment of love and loyalty to keep every promise, no matter what it costs Him.** We see the full expression of *hesed* at the cross. Talking about God's steadfast love and faithfulness is good for our souls, and it's good for others.

“For you, O LORD, have made me glad by Your work; at the works of Your hands I sing for joy” (Ps. 92:4).

Grief is real, and it’s hard. But we grieve in the context of the hope, power, and joy of the gospel. G.K. Chesterton wrote, “Joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian.” Yet Pastor George Grant says, “Too many Christians look and act as if they were baptized in vinegar.”

The redemption story, our story, is a story of joy! At the birth of our Savior the angels brought “good news of great joy” to the shepherds. **Gospel joy is beyond our ability to understand or to produce. It is a spiritual reality.**

The joy of Jesus is in us; it’s a gift (John 15:11). He is the source. **People, circumstances, the pursuit of my own happiness, will never bring gospel joy.** Elisabeth Elliot wrote, “The only means to real joy and contentment is to make His glory the supreme objective of my life.” “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4) is possible only if we think big, if we think long, and if we think biblically.

We’re in the middle of the story at any given moment. We can’t see how everything is going to turn out, but we can rejoice, because our sovereign God will use it to advance the gospel in our lives and maybe even in the lives of others. **We can rejoice in all things because He is with us in all things.** Nothing can separate us from His love (see Rom. 8:35). **Only a sovereign God can make such large promises, and only a loving God would make such large promises.**

Joy is not the absence of pain and sorrow; it’s the presence and purpose of Christ in our sorrow and suffering. Jesus looked beyond the present reality to the eternal reality (Heb. 12:2). **We can’t produce this joy, but we can pray for it.** Psalm 21:6 is my constant prayer: “Make me glad with the joy of your presence.”

Then Psalm 92:5–7 shows the compelling contrast between the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked. It does not blur these two worldviews, and neither should we. These verses clearly show the **destiny and the destination of those who know and worship God, and those who do not.**

Verse 6 is not talking about our mental capacity but our spiritual capacity. The word translated “stupid” comes from the Hebrew word for “brutish.” The question is, am I becoming beautiful like Christ, or **am I becoming brutish?**

We cannot change ourselves, but Jesus made provision for us to choose beauty in His prayer in John 17:22–23. His glory is in us now. His glory is the essence of who He is. It’s His Holy Spirit who produces in us His life-giving spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22–23). The destiny of God’s righteous ones is to become like Christ. **Our circumstances and relationships do not necessarily change, but there is a radical change in our attitudes and actions when we entrust ourselves to our faithful Father.**

Verses eight to eleven quickly take us to Jesus. It is through the power of the gospel that we’re gradually transformed from beast to beauty. The horn of an animal is a symbol of power; it’s a weapon. Jesus is the horn of salvation who secured our destiny to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and our destination, the home Jesus is preparing for us.

The question is, which path are you on? Are you trusting the obedience of Jesus for your salvation? Then you’re clothed with His righteousness, and He has set your feet upon the good path. Are you walking in the brightness and joy of the righteous path, or do you feel stuck? Are your circumstances and relationships, the messages and the mess of this fallen world, confusing and defeating you?

We make progress on the righteous path by using the outward means of grace that God has given us: His Word, prayer, Sabbath worship, the sacraments, and fellowship. As we continue, day after day, year after year, developing and practicing these holy habits, sometimes it feels like we're going through the motions and have fallen into a rut. But it's a righteous rut that gets brighter and brighter.

In Leslie Bennett's heart preparation devotion, she explained that the palm tree's flexibility and root system enable it to endure the violent winds of a hurricane. She wrote: "The child of God is shaped to remain upright in any disaster through the infinite resources of His Spirit, His Word, and His Church." Interestingly, the fruit of the date palms in Israel grow sweeter and more abundant as the tree gets older.

As the huge cedar of Lebanon grows its branches spread out and intertwine. What a sweet picture of the interdependence and unity of God's Church! A tree does not plant itself. **God sovereignly plants us in the time in history and the place on the planet and the family and the local church where He wants us to flourish and to help one another flourish.** We flourish in community as we declare verse 15: "The LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

If there was even a hint of unrighteousness in Jesus, He could not be our righteousness. **This is a declaration of confidence, not self-confidence, but Christ-confidence.**

The church is not perfect, but **we have a perfect Savior who has declared us righteous in His sight and who is using His Word, His Spirit, and His Church to gradually make us righteous in practice.**

We flourish in the courts of the Lord as we share the gospel and our lives with one another. Friendships are formed as we keep the nursery together or plan an event together or take a meal to a grieving family. Over time, friendships flourish, and we're privileged to make the sacred journey to the edges of heaven with a gospel friend.

Titus 2 relationships between older and younger women happen in God's church, as one generation shows and tells the next generation of women how to be life-givers. **It's in the courts of the Lord that we learn to love one another, pray for one another, repent to one another, and forgive one another.** When we walk the righteous path together, we become a joyful community of love and unity where we serve the Lord with gladness and serve one another in love. We become those who give a drink of water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, and who will one day hear Jesus say, "When you did it for one of the least of these my brothers, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

It's in the courts of the Lord that we pray for Christians being persecuted and for prodigal children, and in some mysterious way, those prayers are used to draw prodigal children back and to encourage brothers and sisters in Christ who face martyrdom.

In the Old Testament, Jerusalem was the city of God. Now it's the community of God's people in heaven and on earth. It's you and it's me; it's us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Proverbs 4:19 says, “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” How have you observed the world becoming darker?

The path of the righteous shines brighter and brighter (Prov. 4:18) as God’s Word renews our minds with truth. Share ways we can encourage one another to look beyond the seen to the unseen, eternal realities. Why is it so important that we don’t try to walk alone?

Discuss the practice of our theology becoming doxology. Give an example from your life of experiencing God’s sovereignty and love, which enabled you to praise Him.

Explain a difficult situation or seemingly insignificant task in your life that needs the truth: “the gospel is big enough, good enough, and powerful enough to make every moment of every season of life glorious and significant.”

Susan defined flourishing as not necessarily doing more, but progressively dying to self and becoming more like Jesus. Consider your different roles at home, work, church, or in the community. Name one specific area that you want to flourish.

Whose life have you observed flourishing in old age (Ps. 92:12, 14)? Express how you would like to emulate their walk with God. What tends to get you off the right path?

Susan said, “Joy is not the absence of pain and sorrow; it’s the presence and purpose of Christ in our sorrow and suffering.” How does this definition change your view of the pain in your life? How would the world view Christians if we became more joyful?

What stood out to you from Judy’s story as she suffered from a shocking divorce and cancer?

Describe some of the ways we “flourish in the courts of the Lord” (v. 13) through our church communities. How can you contribute to the life-giving, gospel culture in your church?

