

**Russell Kelfer**  
**The Kind of Tree  
You Were Meant  
to Be**

**#1120-B**

**Series: Making the Spiritual Switch**



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# The Kind of Tree You Were Meant to Be

Based on the emphasis of Scripture it appears that although trees speak a thousand sermons, one message is the most prominent. It is the message of slow, deliberate, long-term growth. That message calls to attention *the kind of tree you were meant to be*.

## THE ULTIMATE PORTRAIT OF A HEALTHY TREE

God's Word is a book of contrasts. The wise man is viewed alongside the scorner or the fool. The house built on the rock is compared to the one built on the sand. Light is viewed as it compares to darkness. God often illustrates principles by exposing opposites. Always the reality of God's perspective is seen at its glorious best when placed alongside the world's alternatives. And so it is with God's description of blessed men and healthy trees as opposed to wind-driven ungodly chaff.

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.

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. (Psalm 1:1-6)

Through the analogy of blessed man and flourishing tree we are allowed once again to make the spiritual switch. The kind of tree you were meant to be is one which is planted beside a consistently flowing river, developing a root system which goes

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deep, drawing life from the river. It is characterized by rich, lush green leaves, healthy roots, and beautiful fruit. Even in a drought year, it is still flourishing.

In Jeremiah, chapter 17, we find a similar analogy, and these two passages together paint a complete picture of God's kind of tree.

Thus, saith the LORD; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. (Jeremiah 17:5-7)

Picture in your mind a hot desert afternoon with a desolate landscape dotted with dried up shrubs whose almost dead branches, devoid of leaves, seem to broadcast an ominous sense of death. Imagine the loneliness, the sense of fruitlessness, the hopelessness those plants communicate. That, says Jeremiah, is what it's like to live your life apart from the fullness of the Spirit of God. And he gives us three classes of people whose lives contain that kind of emptiness.

The first is the man who trusts in man. In other words, the unbeliever, the one who rests the weight of his salvation on anything less than the Gift of God. He may be moral; he may be successful; he may even be religious. But if he has never exchanged his life for God's, he is trusting in man; and he ultimately will find himself, once the desert winds have blown across his life, devoid of power; devoid of fruit; a victim of the heat and the drought. He will spend eternity "where the fire is never quenched, and the worm never dies" (Mark 9:44-50).

The second category is made up of those who "make the flesh their arm". That is, they may have put their trust in God, but they have never learned to rest in God. So they spend their lives trying to please God through some form of religiosity, rather than letting God be Himself in them. They have trusted God for their salvation but cannot trust Him day by day for their provisions. And so when the heat comes, they inhabit the parched places in the desert; they live in an uninhabited wilderness, where there is no nourishment; and there is no peace.

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The third category includes those “whose heart departeth from the Lord.” They have trusted; they have rested; but whether through yielding to some besetting sin or simply through a gradual departure from fellowship that was once theirs, they have departed. They, perhaps more than the others, feel it when the hot winds of adversity blow and the rains of God’s blessings appear to have dried up, for they have tasted of God’s sweet inner peace, have experienced His awesome inner power, and have been aware of His great inner purpose. Somehow, however, the flow of nourishment into their lives has begun to wane. Now they stand dry and parched in the midst of life’s wilderness, not even recognizable from those other trees whose roots have never tasted of His love.

Ah, but “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is...” Why? Because he shall be like a tree. Jeremiah continues:

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.  
(Jeremiah 17:8)

He shall be *like a tree*. that certain kind of tree you and I were meant to be: a tree planted by the waters. There’s that phrase again– planted by the waters– the characteristic of the kind of tree we were meant to be. Jesus elaborated in John 15 as he further illustrated using the symbol of the extravagantly producing grapevine.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit 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.  
(John 15:4,5)

Both the tree and the vine, then, are vitally connected to the Source of nourishment. We learn, first of all, that to be the tree you were meant to be it is necessary to be planted in Christ. A man or woman can place themselves by the river bank, paint themselves up like a giant oak, go to a religious grocery store, buy some fruit, paste it on their branches, and pretend to be a tree. But when the season of drought comes, the truth will be revealed. Unless they have been grafted onto the true vine, the winds will

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beat against them, and they will collapse, a perfect portrait of a cardboard imitation of the real thing. If you have never personally placed your life at the feet of Jesus Christ, accepting His free gift of salvation as full payment for your sins, and asked Him to come into your life, and take over your life and live your life, then you're not really a tree at all. You're a shrub in the desert painted up to look like a tree.

When the judgment comes, and you have to stand before God, you will have no advocate with the Father, for he will have offered to place you in the vine, and you will have refused. *In Christ!* Those two little words make the difference between heaven and hell, between life and death. If your spirit has never relinquished control to the Holy Spirit by trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to save you, you will never be a tree.

The second aspect of being planted is to not only be *in Christ*, but also to be *by the river*. Where you plant yourself will determine whether or not you will grow. Where is the river? The river is wherever the Word is flowing and the Spirit is giving life. Negatively, it means you immediately stop getting your nourishment from the world. If you're to be the kind of tree you were meant to be, you will not be found "walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful" (Psalms 1:1). Doublemindedness is an abomination to God.

Organized religion has for 2,000 years sought to integrate the mind of God and the ways of the world. It has, for the most part, ignored the fact that "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). It has used the cleverness of man, the creativity of man, and the philosophy of man to further the Kingdom of God. That's much like using a saw and hammer to fashion a tree. If you're to be the kind of tree you were meant to be, you'll have to redefine who your friends are. You will continue to love and cherish those outside of Christ so that you can reach out to them, but the antennas of your spirit will be closed to their counsel; instead, you will find where God's Word is being taught, God's mind is being revealed, and God's Name being exalted. You will, like a wise owl, station yourself where the waters run deep.

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

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Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be My disciples. (John 15:7,8)

In addition to being found *in Christ* and *planted by the river* the passage in John 15 affords us an understanding of the third requirement for being the tree you were meant to be: *abiding*. To abide in Christ is more than being where the Word is taught or upheld or explained. It is to take the Word you have received, draw it into your life, and *meditate on it day and night*.

That's what the Psalmist meant when he said if you're going to be the kind of tree you were meant to be you must learn to "delight in the law of the Lord, and in His law meditate day and night". Day and night means always. It means abiding in the sense of remaining securely connected to the Source of nourishment just like the branch abides in the vine. It means developing a way of life that simply has as its heartbeat the Word of God. It means taking in the Word not only for information and inspiration, but for transformation. It means personalizing it, appropriating it and acting on it, continually, as though *one known violation* will break the heart of God. It means "as you walk by the way, as you sit down, as you rise up," depending on the Word of God becomes as natural as breathing. Unconfessed sin becomes a blight on your Spirit not worth the price you have to pay, for the Word loses its power when sin blocks the flow of the nourishment that flows from the trunk to the branch. Small compromises cease to be acceptable because, like tiny worms that infest giant trees, if left untended they will destroy from within and the tree will fall.

The final key to the growth of the desirable tree is time. Strong, enduring trees are not amazingly fast growers. Those tend to be short-lived and prone to yielding to the crushing onslaughts of the storms of life. Those trees who would stand tall and strong, even as the water which usually nourishes them dries up, will have endured radical pruning, the icy breath of winter, the seemingly sad loss of leaves in the fall, the continual flow of new life and new leaves in the spring, and the heat of burning summer sun. The process simply cannot be rushed.

Time is the one great ingredient that man simply despises including in his menu of spiritual delicacies. We want to become giant oaks in a year or two, but giant oaks don't grow to be giant oaks in a year or two. We try all kinds of spiritual fertilizer, use all kinds of religious trickery, and create all kinds of activities that we guarantee can be cloned and packaged, hoping even the

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scrawniest scrub can look like a mighty tree in only days. But looking like a tree, or sounding like a tree, isn't *being* one.

That's why the heartbeat of the church must always be those who have quietly stood the test of time. They may not be vocal ones. They may not be the visible ones. They may not even be the talented ones. But they are the kind of trees the body of Christ needs when the battle begins to rage: men and women who have not only read books on prayer; but have spent years on their knees making it work. They are men and women who have not only taught seminars on love, but who have spent years loving, and giving, and being, living expressions of I Corinthians 13. They are men and women who not only can teach and preach on standing in the storm, but who have themselves stood in the storm until the leaves of God's Spirit have developed on the branches of their lives, and the hungry of the flock have waited in the shade of their branches to be fed.

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Becoming a tree takes a lifetime. If you spend all your time taking your temperature to see if you're growing, you won't have time to let God be Himself so you *can* grow. Satan's ploy is to convince the Christian that he or she has been planted by the river all these years, and more or less abiding in the vine all these years, and nothing seems to be happening. That's a lie from the father of lies. If you are abiding in the vine, and His Word is abiding in you, *you are growing*. That's an absolute. Maybe you're not a missionary; maybe you're not a visible spiritual hero; maybe you're still struggling with problems you've had all your life. But mark it, Beloved, you are growing. You can't see a tree grow. And there are some that you think will never bear fruit, but you can't see what's going on inside of them, so you don't know.

Often the "leaders" in the body of Christ become those who, from the world's perspective, can pass Madison Avenue's test for success: sharp, articulate, driven motivators, and often manipulators of men. That's not a person God calls a tree. A tree is a man who plants himself by the river of God, roots himself in the nourishment of God's Word, and when the winds of adversity begin to blow, rests himself in the shelter of God's everlasting arms, knowing that the one final ingredient that makes a tree a tree is time. And time is not something we can circumvent or accelerate or alter. It is the tender touch of a Holy God saying



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“abide, abide and in due time you will become a tree. Not just any tree, mind you– the kind of tree you were meant to be: planted, rooted, and rested by the river. God promises four things will ultimately happen:

1- You will bear fruit, but in season. When God deems it proper, you will produce the fruit of the spirit. It is a promise.

2- Your leaf will be green. It will not wither. When the heat is on the fruit will remain. You may not even be aware of it, but the tests you now think are destroying you are only revealing, through you, the God who owns you.

3- Therefore, you won't be anxious in the year of drought. When the rains of God's blessing seem to have vanished with His clouds of mercy, and the deadly rays of the summer sun beat upon you, the hidden nourishment stored up in your heart from meditation will quietly allow you to rest.

4- You never will cease yielding fruit. The issue won't be how much fruit you seem to be bearing this year, but if your roots are deep, and you are planted by the river, quietly, consistently, ever so magnificently, the leaves will unfold, the fruit will form, and the life of the One who gives you life will be passed on to others. Passing years will confirm where you have been planted.

That's the kind of tree you were meant to be. Slow-growing? Maybe. Needing lots of pruning? Perhaps. Withstanding even floods and winds and ice and heat? Yes. But one day you'll be standing there, not even aware that you are that kind of tree, when a little bird will nest in your branches, and whisper in your ear, “thanks for being there when I need you!” Or a little lamb, separated from the flock, may press itself against your trunk, and sighing add, “Thanks for growing strong enough to lean on.” Or maybe a group of children, out for a walk by the river, will see the rich, ripe fruit you didn't even know you bore, and taking a piece to be nourished, say “thanks, Mr. Tree, for taking the time it takes to stand long enough to have fruit like that.”

Maybe passersby will take your picture, stand in awe of the God who created you, and never even mention your part in the process. What a joy! That means that in heaven, at the Bema seat of Christ, a precious gem will be yours for eternity because you did not share the glory of God but allowed it to be offered to The God of Glory. On that day, when the heavens are singing angelic anthems of praise and a literal forest of believers is gathered

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around the tree of Life worshipping the Lamb, you will rejoice with joy unspeakable that you made the choice and took the time to become *the kind of tree you were meant to be*.

Take inventory right now. Have you ever trusted Christ? If not, then you cannot become a tree at all. Have you trusted, but never rested? Then the power of God cannot flow through you and nourish you, and receive all the glory. Have you trusted and rested, but has your heart, as the Psalmist said, “departed from The Lord?” Have you grown discouraged waiting to see the fruit, and gradually stop abiding, and resting, and waiting? It’s not too late. Today, right now, you may quietly bow your head, open your heart, yield your life anew, and ask God to take whatever time you have left and use it to make you into a tree. Not just any kind of tree, mind you. Ask Him to make you *the kind of tree you were meant to be*.

Then plant yourself by that river and root yourself in God’s Word. Be patient. It is true. Only God can make a tree. But it is also true that making living trees is the greatest joy of His Heart. He simply desires of you and of me that we allow Him to make us into the trees we were meant to be.

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### A Challenge to Further Study and Application

1- Using a concordance, do a study of the words “milk” and “meat” in Scripture. How did the use of these words to describe their physical value set the stage for the “spiritual switch”? How did Jeremiah 15:16 set the stage for that transition?

2- Write out Psalm 1:1-3 in your own words. Who is the “he” referred to in verse 3? What prerequisites were there to becoming the “tree” we were intended to be? Define “delight” in verse 2. Define “day and night”.

3- Now combine Psalm 1:1-3 with Jeremiah 17:7-8. What is the picture that comes to your mind? From those two passages, can you draw a picture of the kind of tree that God wants you to be?

4- What are you doing in your life to be sure that you are “planted” by the river? What more can you do? How faithful are you to partake of the river’s flow? Have you come to take it with presumption or casually as you have grown older in the faith? How do we know that is a danger? Can you find a passage to confirm that?

5- Are you an “abiding” believer? What do you think that means? What does God promise will happen if we are faithful to “abide”? What attitude does He say is necessary? (John 15:5)

6- Why is time so crucial to God’s plan? Why does man always want to see growth immediately? Why does God seem to move so slowly? How does studying trees help us understand the value of time?

Memorize: Psalm 1:1-3

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