

Tuesday, May 18, 2010 - How Deep are your Roots?

In most plants, the root system is a below-ground structure that serves primarily to anchor the plant in the soil and take up water and minerals. Roots may be less familiar than the more visible flowers, stems, and leaves, but they are no less important to the plant.

The growth and branches of a plant will only be as healthy as its roots are strong and deep. A palm tree can grow in the most desert-like conditions. In drought everything around it will dry up and die, but the palm tree will continue to grow in freshness. This is because it has a long tap-root that goes deep into the ground and finds the water beneath.

So it is with us as Christians. Many passages speak to the importance of God's people building healthy a "root system."

*** Jeremiah 17:7-8 - "But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit"**

*** Ezekiel 31:7 - "So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches: for its roots extended to many waters."** The reason it is such a magnificent tree is because its roots go deep down and reach "many waters." The beauty that is evident above the ground is a result of the unseen roots beneath.

*** Romans 11:16, 18 - ". . . and if the root be holy, the branches are too . . . Remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you"**

*** Colossians 2:6-7 - "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, *rooted and built up in him*, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness"**

*** Ephesians 3:17-19 - ". . . so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, *being rooted and established in love*, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."** It is only as our roots go deeper and deeper into Christ that we are being filled up to all the fullness of God!

How do Christians build a root system so strong that the “winds of change” or the hurricanes of life won’t blow them from a life dedicated to God?

Christ answers that question for us in His first recorded parable found in **Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23; Mark 4:4-8, 14-21; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15.**

The Sower went forth to sow. The idea of a sower at his task was a perfectly natural illustration for this culture and time period -- one which would be quite familiar to all of those present. The clear picture which is brought to mind is that of a man walking along, carrying a sack of grain, and broadcasting it (somewhat indiscriminately) by hand. The exhortation to "behold" (i.e., "look at") and use of the definite article (i.e., "the sower") may even indicate that Jesus referred to an actual person who was within sight of the audience. We understand that The Sower represents Christ, the great Teacher (**John 3:2**). In principle, it could apply to anyone who sows the seed of the kingdom.

The seed is the word of God (**Luke 8:11**). The seed, representing the word, is that which contains life (**John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23**). In the natural course of the work of a sower it was inevitable that the seed would fall into various types of soils.

There are four different types of soil which the seed comes in contact. The four types of soils represent the various sorts of attitudes that men have towards the gospel of Christ. The question we must all answer is which type of soil best describes me?

The Wayside Soil (some of the seed fell by the wayside) indicates hard-packed earth, perhaps a well-trodden path or road, running through or around the field. The soil does not lack fertility, but it is hard. Contact is made with the seed, but because the soil is so hard, penetration is not made. This soil would not allow any of the seed to sink in, much less take root. **Matthew 13:19** says this represents those who do not understand. The problem is they refuse to understand. They have the ability to comprehend, but not the willingness to learn. The hardness represents the disposition to not believe (**Luke 8:12**). This person simply is not interested in the gospel of Christ. Their heart is hardened to the truth. What are the possible reasons for the hardness of heart?

- * Pride cause some to resist; the Jews were a prime example (**Prov. 16:18**).
- * Some have other idols which will not allow a place for God (**Eze. 14:1-5**).
- * The fear of giving things up hinders some. The rich young ruler, who refused to follow Christ, had this problem (**Luke 18:18-25**).
- * Worldliness is a hindrance to many (**Rom. 1:18-32**)

The result was that this seed quickly became bird food. The bird represents Satan

(**Matt. 13:19**). Satan comes immediately (**Mark 4:15**), and snatches the seed away (**Matt. 13:19**). They are blinded by Satan to the gospel of Christ (**2 Cor. 4:3-4**). While Satan contributes to their blindness, it is accelerated by their own hardness of heart! Satan takes the seed away after the soil has rejected it. Satan is always happy to cooperate with those who reject the truth (**John 13:27; Matt. 27:4; Acts 5:3-4**).

The Rocky Soil (some of the seed fell upon stony soil) suggests "a ledge of rock covered with a very thin coating of soil." This language might seem, at first glance, to suggest soil mingled with small rocks. This, however, does not explain the fact that the plants which sprang up "had no deepness of earth." In this shallow soil, it was only natural that the seeds sprouted and "sprang up" very quickly. With the rising of the sun, however, these plants were unable to withstand the heat. Without a sufficient root system to provide moisture or nourishment, they soon withered away. This soil represents the one who:

- * "hears the word and immediately receives it with joy" (**Matt 13:20**)
- * "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while" (**Matt 13:21**)
- * "when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (**Mt 13:21**)

This is not a stubborn, rebelling heart, but one that lacks deeper seriousness. The seed sprang up immediately because it lacked the needed depth. A plant cannot survive that is not adequately rooted. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy, but with no root, they are not grounded in the Word. This is the emotional, superficial, impulsive hearer. It could represent those who are "won to Christ" on the basis of frills, rather than solid gospel. When troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs. They do not count the cost (**Luke 14:25**); there is a daily cross to bear (**Luke 9:23**).

One must be rooted in Christ (**Col. 2:7; Eph.3:17**). We learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution.

The Thorny Soil (Some of the seed fell among thorns) was full of impurities, namely thorns. Although the seed was able to take root and grow in this type of ground, it was no match for the head start and the extremely hardy nature which the thorns enjoyed. Over time, this seed was deprived of everything essential to its growth and, as a result, was choked out of existence. This soil represents the one who "hears the word" (**Mt 13:22**) but whose ability to bear fruit is choked by:

- * "the cares of this world" - **Matt 13:22b**

- * "the deceitfulness of riches" - **Mt 13:22c**
- * "pleasures of life" (**Luke 8:14**)

How these three "thorns" can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of God's Word:

- * The cares of this world can cause us to be unprepared – (**Luke 21:34-36**)
- * The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can detract our minds from what is truly important (**Lk 12:29-32**)
- * The deceitfulness, dangers and evils of riches are described in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**. The evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient - **1 Ti 6:17**
- * Pleasures of life, those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit – **Gal. 5:17**
- * Sowing to the flesh makes it impossible to reap of the Spirit! – **Gal. 6:7-9**

The Good Soil (some seed fell upon good soil) is the honest and good heart (**Luke 8:15**). Note the actions of the honest and good heart:

- * It hears and understands the word (**Matt. 13:23**).
- * It hears and accepts (**Mark 4:20**).
- * It hears and holds fast the word (**Luke 8:15**).
- * "indeed bears fruit and produces" (**Matt 13:23**)

Luke adds that he hears "the word with a noble and good heart", and then "keeps it and bears fruit with patience" (**Luke 8:15**). They will be like the Bereans, who were commended for being "fair-minded", as manifested in the way they:

- * "Received the word with all readiness"
 - * "Searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (**Acts 17:11**).
- It is NOT enough to be daily bible readers. We MUST immerse ourselves in daily bible study!

Note the importance of "understanding" in relation to "bearing fruit". When one "understands", they will more likely "bear fruit"; but the key to understanding is having a "good and noble heart" that is willing to listen and learn! This soil produces in varying quantities "Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (**Matt. 13:23**). Whatever our ability, we should exercise it accordingly (**1 Pet. 4:10-11**).

We must be the right kind of hearers. There is no salvation apart from the life giving

words of Christ. Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Our faith is to be found in hearing (listening to the word through our heart as we read the sacred pages) the Word of God. What is so special about the Word of God that it is the only source of our Faith?

Jesus answers this question in John 17:17 when, in prayer to God, he says, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." God's word is truth! It is the basis on which our faith is built. It was given to us by God as he spoke to the writers of the New Testament through the Holy Spirit. How many times was it given? Jude 1:3 answers, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." "The Faith" talked about here is the gospel and it was delivered once!

How is the word of God able to build our faith? Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No other source can convict us of our sinful state except the Word of God. Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "Every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." The passage says "complete, furnished completely", that means there is no need for anything else, what was given is all sufficient.

But seed has no power unless it is sown. Christ wants everyone exposed to the Gospel. We must bear fruit by spreading the seed. We must not let bad influences harden us to the truth. We must resist Satan. We must avoid the dangers which go along with materialism, worldliness, etc.

"In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" Ephesians 2:21-22 (see also 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5).

When we hear the Word it is very important that it goes deep into our hearts and becomes rooted in our lives. The depth of the planting is based on the openness of our heart. If our heart is not fully open, then there is only a shallow planting, which is easily rooted out by the enemy, Satan (**Matthew 13:19**).

If our roots in God are strong and healthy our outward lives will automatically show the

life and nature of Christ to those around us.

Jesus said: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:4-5.

Will your roots withstand the storms of life?