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How Deep Are Your Roots in Christ

Reflections [Parables and the Teaching of Jesus](#) 10 January 2016

[Jeremiah 17:7-8](#)

[Matthew 12:33-37](#)

[Matthew 13:1-9](#)

[Matthew 13:31-32](#)

[Matthew 21:18-22](#)

[Matthew 21:33-46](#)

[Colossians 2:7-8](#)

[1 Timothy 4:16](#)

When everything was going well, with favourable weather, an otherwise happy farmer remarked, "My crops are especially vulnerable. Even a short drought could have a devastating effect." To the surprise of a friend, who asked why, the farmer explained that, while we tend to see frequent rain as a benefit, during such times the plants are not required to push their roots deeper in search of water. Their roots remain near the surface, and a drought would find such plants unprepared; even a short dry spell could quickly kill them.

That is what happens to most people who come to Christ with great enthusiasm, and celebrate their new-found faith, without taking deeper root in Jesus. We find the church, the worship, the songs, the fellowship, all going well for us, and we become complacent; when something makes us slide backward, we find the slide unstoppable.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 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 17:7-8 (KJV)

This brings us to the parables of Jesus. We know that Jesus used parables to convey His profound teaching in His earthly ministry. He wanted His hearers to relate to the theme, and to remember the parables from generation to generation; and so He drew His imagery from everyday life — farming, fishing, trade, and the like. He was preparing the ground for His disciples, so that when the time came for them to teach concerning the Kingdom of Jesus, their hearers would already be familiar with these parables, handed down by word of mouth. He was sowing the seed of understanding. The parables that

draw upon farming are especially persuasive and telling, for the insight they convey: the tree and its fruits (Matthew 12:33-37); the sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23); the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32); the cursing of the fig tree (Matthew 21:18-22); and the parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:33-46) are among the best known.

Many of us are familiar enough with gardening. One takes the small seeds, scatters them, waters them, does some weeding, and something remarkable happens — something that even those with a degree in botany still find remarkable. The small, dried seed becomes life, and that life brings forth new life in a new seed, taking its part in a larger natural order, through its relationship with birds, insects, worms, and, of course, people like us, who eat the fruit and produce of such plants. We also know that this wonderful cycle can be brought to an end, for a number of reasons.

The parable of the sower explains the matter plainly: only the seed that falls upon fertile ground will survive, and that fertility may well change as the pressures of everyday life increase. Perseverance, therefore, requires that we irrigate the heart with the pervading work of the Holy Spirit.

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving: beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." — Colossians 2:7-8 (KJV)

It is inevitable that we shall meet people who would attempt to spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit; our safeguard against this is a deeper understanding of the Scriptures, and especially of the Gospel. We tend to be satisfied with a merely superficial understanding of the Gospel; having read it once, we settle for what we understood at the first reading. There is truly no end to what may be learned from the Holy Book, and it is therefore essential that we have a settled plan for studying the Word of God, and continue in it throughout our lives.

I read once of a person who could recite the Old Testament from memory, without a single mistake, and I have envied many who could quote Scripture, with book, chapter and verse, with such ease. Yet none of this is a prerequisite for understanding the Word of God. What matters is that what we learn from the Bible becomes internalised, so that we begin to live beneath the shelter of that learning; the application of what we learn must then come naturally to us.

When we come to a crossroads, or face adverse situations in life, it is

often said that one must ask, 'What would Jesus do?' The question is easily asked, but finding the right answer requires a depth of understanding of the Gospel of Christ.

The point today is that our roots in Christ must go deeper and deeper, as we continue to mature in Him; and this process should never end.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." — 1 Timothy 4:16 (KJV)

Amen.

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