

## ROOTS

**“But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time.” (Matt 13:21)**

The importance of roots is indisputable. The seed that does not produce roots, cannot produce fruit. But not all roots are good. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). The root of bitterness defiles many (Heb. 12:15). John the Baptist promised that the ax of God would be used on bad roots (Matt. 3:10). But while bad roots produce bad fruit, good roots produce good fruit. The withered root of Ephraim produced no fruit (Hos. 9:16), but Isaiah predicted: **“Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above.” (Isa 37:31)** Every plant not planted by God will be pulled up by the roots (Matt. 15:13).

Jesus, as you know, is the Root and the Offspring of David (Rev. 22:16). He grew up like a tender shoot and like a Root out of dry ground (Isa 53:2). Isaiah also predicted: **“The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.” (Rom 15:12)**. Remember! The branches do not support the Root, but the Root supports the branches (Rom. 11:18). God has promised to cut off all branches that do not bear fruit (Jn. 15:2).

The Promised land was filled with grapes and the Hebrews were commanded to prune their vineyards for 6 years but not on the 7<sup>th</sup> (Lev. 25:3, 4). They were also familiar with grafting (Rom. 11:17 - 24), and fertilizer (Lk. 13:8). Fertilizer was important because what happens to the roots below the ground is essential to produce the harvest above the ground.

It is a fact that a 10,000 pound elephant can be tethered with a wooden peg and a small rope. The “training” to make this possible begins with a strong chain and an iron post when the elephant is a baby. After years of conditioning, the elephant is “trained” to no longer try. Something quite similar happens to tree roots in small pots. The root systems tries but is trapped. The only way those roots can grow is in a circle. When this potted tree is transplanted in the open field, the roots like the elephant, continue to behave the way they were trained. This circular growth is called “stem girdling roots” or “SGR”. The tree may appear to be healthy, but the circular root system chokes off water and nutrients that are necessary for good growth. The “stem girdling roots” prevent the tree from reaching it’s full potential. Like a house on the sand, SGR trees cannot stand the storm.

The problem can be prevented by aggressive pruning. When the potted tree is removed from it’s small container, the circling roots must be cut off. The shorter roots, not programed to grow in circles, can thus can grow out straight and strong. While all trees are different, it is not uncommon for roots in healthy trees to extend horizontally beyond reach of the limbs above them.

The spiritual application of these truths is far reaching and profound. In the church at Corinth everyone exerted an effort to exhort, and today everyone must be exhorted to exert an effort. In the church at Corinth everyone had a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation (1 Cor. 14:26). In today’s traditional church the Corinthians would be ushered to the door and invited not to return. While they all spoke “one by one” (1 Cor. 14:31), today all of the speaking is done by one. Christians raised in such an environment are trained to be quiet. They pay their dues, and sit quietly in the pew. One preacher from a previous generation described them as “bookless, thoughtless, heedless, and often drowsy”. Converts raised with such limitations, will probably need to experience some radical pruning before they will ever grow normally.

Understanding the nature of roots will help you to understand why the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch, not Jerusalem; why someone born in Tarsus was chosen as an apostle to the Gentiles; why the Spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip and did not permit him to “disciple” the Eunuch; and why people from institutional churches have difficulty understanding the freedom they have in Christ. It also helps us to understand why Jesus was crucified by Bible students.