

Roots Of Evil

Did you know the Bible tells us that sin has roots? In this newsletter, we will be digging to discover them.

Searching for Roots

Near the end of the book of Hebrews, Paul exhorts his readers to follow peace and holiness, then he charges them to be diligent about their salvation in these words:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; (Hebrews 12:15 KJV)

Did you know we can fail to obtain the grace of God? Yes, Paul tells us that we need to be diligent in searching out our sins, lest a root of bitterness spring up and defile many. It's highly likely that he is making a reference to the curses pronounced against Israel when he writes this. Specifically, Deuteronomy 29:18-20.

Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.

In this reference, we find someone walking in their own ways and disbelieving that evil will come upon them. The root of bitterness in both verses is sins that have not been put away. The lesson means a lot more to anyone who has worked in a garden.

Pulling Roots

I have been growing a garden this year, and, while listening to Christ's Object Lessons, I was struck by this particular passage:

The youth should be instructed in a similar way. They should be taught to till the soil. It would be well if there were, connected with every school, lands for cultivation. Such lands should be regarded as God's own schoolroom. The things of nature should be looked upon as a lesson book which His children are to study, and from which they may obtain knowledge as to the culture of the soul. (Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 87)

The next time I went to weed my garden, I prayed, asking God to teach me a lesson. Appar-

ently, growing a garden is a very good way to learn spiritual lessons! Did you know the best time to pull weeds is about three days after a good rain? The soil is still moist, and the weeds come up really easily! Reading the Bible softens the heart. The more you read the Bible, the easier it will be to root out bad habits. I also learned that the sooner you pull the weeds, the easier they are to pull. Of course, this requires a lot more diligence because smaller ones are harder to grab. In the same way, little, bad habits are easier to pull but harder to find, while big, bad habits are harder to pull but easier to find.

It just so happens that I didn't weed my garden at all last year. The pesky Deer found a way through my double fence and mowed it for free. They just left the weeds. When I tilled it, there were several Dock plants that I didn't bother pulling.. That was a mistake. Did you know that every plant has different types of roots? Some, like Poke weeds and Dock, have very deep roots that go straight down. Others have roots that lie just below the surface, and still others have as many roots below ground as foliage above. No weed seems to be the same. And there is a trick for digging each. The trick for Dock is to wait until it rains and bring a shovel. Apparently, Dock roots can grow a whole plant from a small piece of root; they are very hard to kill. The population in my garden went from about 15-20 plants to 30 square feet of garden space after I tilled. I found that every torn piece of root sprouted! When the tiller ripped up the fat main root, all the little roots that were left deep down also sprouted. Some are as deep as three feet. If this plant could have a name, it would be the selfishness plant. The roots are where plants get their energy and tenacity. All sin has a root. Ellen White tells us:

The idol money has power over thousands who trust and love wealth more than they love or trust in the living God. The things of the world are sought after and considered worthy to be admired and enjoyed by all those who are not lovers of the cross of Christ and who are not spiritual worshipers. The fashions of the world, the desire of the eye, the love of self, the vainglory—all are obstructions to piety and separate the soul from God. Should we take up these hindrances one by one and strike to destroy them, it would be like picking off the leaves of a tree, which would only put forth

its green foliage again. The truth, Bible truth, the message God has given to us, is the axe to be laid at the root of the tree. (Manuscript 50, 1886)

The Root of Sin

We read of the very first root in Isaiah:

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:17 KJV)

The root of Lucifer's sin was pride in his own beauty and brightness. When we look at what corrupted Lucifer, we see that there was no reason or explanation for it. Sin led Lucifer to look away from God, who rightfully deserved the honor for creating a being so beautiful. Sin used something good to corrupt something good. Sin is a mystery; there is no explanation for it, and yet millions today are being led down the same path. God forms every human in their mother's womb, and yet sin uses the vanity of beauty to lead men and women, not to their Creator in gratitude, but to look upon themselves as superior to others. The Bible declares:

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain. (Proverbs 31:30 KJV)

The world is brimming with beauty despite sin! But because of sin it is a beauty that fades. It is a corruptible beauty:

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:8 KJV)

God seeks to call the attention of man from things that are corruptive and destructive to true beauty:

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (Psalms 29:2 KJV)

Here we have identified one root of sin: Pride. There is no reason for it, and it grows by usurping the place of gratitude. Pride and gratitude cannot exist in the same heart; they compete for the same resources for growth, like two plants competing over space in a garden. There are, of course, more roots. Another is appetite, the gratification of a desire to taste things. Cinnamon, capsaicin, and other strong spices fall into this category, but it extends beyond mere taste; tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, L-theanine, while not necessarily food with a taste, are sought for the experience they bring. Appetite leads a person to indulge in food or substances that damage the body or call forth extravagant expenses to tingle the taste buds. While some are

certainly worse than others, they are nevertheless all fleshly lusts that war against the soul. I have seen something fascinating in my life. I believe I have mentioned it once before in a newsletter, but for the sake of 1 Peter 1:12, and to make my point, I will repeat it here.

My old roommate was addicted to Nicotine. One day, he decided to quit. Nicotine is an indulgence of appetite... he struggled intensely with it, then he found something that helped. Cinnamon Gum. He chewed a new piece every 5 minutes. I had just recently read that Cinnamon was an indulgence of appetite, like Nicotine, but not nearly as bad. When I asked him why he reeked of cinnamon, he told me it made the craving go away a little bit. This was profound to me. Here was a guy overcoming a terrible habit, but the root of the problem is merely shifting its center of control. Next to go out was coffee, he told me research proved that if you keep drinking coffee and quit smoking, you were 55% more likely to return to the habit. He told me he was convinced it almost served as a gateway drug. Out goes the coffee, and in comes the Rhodiola and Eleuthero at twice the rate of the coffee. The Plants have been pulled, but the roots remain, and in the place of one plant 4 smaller plants emerge. That's exactly what happened with the Dock plants in my garden. The root of the problem persists: the same plant, but with a different appearance. Instead of being big and intimidating, it has become several smaller plants, but they cover more of the area of the life than the large plant. The world looks upon this as success, but the weed of appetite has managed to occupy more space in the heart.

Sin can only be weeded out of life through the diligence and the abiding presence of Christ. If the space of the heart is cleared, it must be occupied by good habits. Only God can free a person from the sin of indulgence of appetite, but anyone can quit smoking if they are persistent and follow all the "tricks."

So here is my question to you: Is sin being plucked out of your life by the roots? Are you planting good habits in its place, like gratitude and temperance? Or, is sin occupying more ground—marching through your heart like an army of small Dock plants.

For a finished work,

Jonathan Taylor

Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35

More Food for the Little Flock —