



## **THE JAPANESE MAPLE TREE...Being “Root-Bound”**

### **From the Series: “In The Garden With the Master Gardener”**

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#### **INTRODUCTION:**

One does not need to be a gardener to hear the Lord’s voice and learn from Him. Whatever we are doing, He is still going about teaching in parables just as He did when He walked the earth.

So, whatever your “passion” or interest, invite Him to walk with you and ask Him to give you “ears to hear” what He wants to speak into your life. That is how the “Master Gardener” has spoken to me. As I work in the various garden areas around my home, He is always present to speak into the “garden of my life.” May you be blessed you as you look into His Word in this study.

In the fall of 2005, I received a Japanese Maple tree from a friend of mine. It was one that she had so we were transplanting it from one garden to another garden. We felt that fall was the best time to do this. I had always wanted a Japanese Maple and so with the offer, I was thrilled and knew the perfect spot. When the time came to make the transfer, I had my hole dug and ready so that the transfer could be made as quickly as possible in order not to bring too much stress upon the root system. Good nourishing soil was also ready to use in the planting.

When the transfer was made, everything was done for this little tree that could possibly be done to help it continue to thrive and flourish....good soil, appropriate nutrients and of course plenty of water to help the root system become re-established in a new environment.

I loved this little tree and it added so much to the garden area where it was planted. As I thought about it, the Master Gardener came to remind me of His great love for us in spite of our condition, in spite of all He had done for us. The choice was ours.

**[John 3:16 \(HCSB\)](#)**

“For God loved the world in this way; He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

**Look at John 15:9:** What does Jesus say about His love for you?

Read also Ephesians 2:4, 5 and in your own words, make a note of what you feel this Scripture reference speaks to you personally.

As the fall came, and leaves began to fall, I was concerned about my little tree, but I knew that going through the winter and come spring...that would be the factor and the conditions to let me know how it was doing (the harshness of winters can put to the test their root systems...just as these times do to us).

As spring arrived, I continually looked for signs of new life and as I saw buds here and there on the tree, I was thrilled and excited that it had made it through the winter. After the leaves all seemed to appear, I also was a little concerned as I just sensed that there were very small signs of something not being quite right. Here and there, I saw a few small dead places, but proceeded to fertilize the tree and hoping that it would continue to progress (believing it was still adjusting to its new environment).

One day as I was planting some other plants and working in that area, I noticed that the leaves were just not looking as healthy. There were some that appeared to be shriveling up. After a couple of weeks, I knew that the fate of the tree was not life...but death as all the leaves were beginning to do the same. How sad I was. In spite of all the care, in spite of good nourishing soil, adequate water, there was no more hope.

I again was reminded of the previous verses you looked at and the Master Gardener also reminded me of how we may sometimes pour our lives into others, but in the end they choose whether it will be life or death for them. It is at those times we can have just an “inkling” of how our Lord must feel when we make the wrong choices.

The first great disappointment for God was back in the garden (see Genesis 3:1-11). Man listened to the “voice of death” and the rest of the story you well know. God’s Word brings life but Satan’s word brings death. The choice is ours as to which voice we will listen to.

Read Deuteronomy 30:19, 20. God is speaking here. What is it that He says?

It is a matter of OBEDIENCE! [Deuteronomy 30:20 \(HCSB\)](#) says

“Love the Lord your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life and He will prolong your life in the land the Lord swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

The Amplified Bible states that “He is your life and the length of your days.” Long life means we hold fast. Allow that root system to respond to what is placed there. The evidence of that will be seen above ground (the fruit).

#### **Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35**

Saul had a choice. As you read this portion, you see that he only partially obeyed what he was told to do. Partial obedience is not okay with God. It must be 100% in His eyes. Partial obedience (according to Him) is no obedience at all!

**Take a moment and reflect:** Ask the Lord to show you any area where you may not be 100% obedient. Be open to His correction so that your “root system” is not destroyed.

Man's choice to not choose God's way brings about a depraved nature. Look at Ephesians 4:17-19.

1. They are darkened in their understanding.
2. They are excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance in them and the hardness of heart.
3. They became callous and greedy for more.

To sum it up: spiritual deadness! Their "leaves" had "shriveled up!"

Back to the little tree and further analysis:

As I contemplated further just what the problem was to cause this tree to no longer have life, I noticed that a few of the annuals I had planted in that area were also not doing well. My mind began to question and wonder about the soil...was there something in that soil? Had that soil become contaminated somehow? I really couldn't see how that could be as a lot of the soil in that area had been enriched and garden soil had been added to the area before any planting.

Once again, the Mater Gardener came along side to remind me of how the soil of our lives can become contaminated by sin.

Romans 8:6-8 (HCSB)

"For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. Those whose lives are in the flesh are unable to please God.

The sinful nature and the Spirit are in conflict (thus contaminated soil).

Look at verse 5 of Romans 8. What does this verse tell you?

The carnal mind is the containment and is liable to death just as contaminated soil to a plant brings death to that plant, but the spiritually minded have life and peace and are in full prospect of eternal life.

Verse 7 states that the mind of flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God's law. It will not come under obedience (in rebellion).

**Take a moment for prayer and reflection.** How is the soil of your life? Is there conflict? If so, submit those areas to the Lord, asking for forgiveness. If there is no conflicts, just re-commit and reaffirm your life to His ways and ask Him to watch over the soil of your life that it not become contaminated.

Look at the following verses:

1. Galatians 5:19-21. The works of flesh lead to what?

2. [Galatians 6:8](#). What are the consequences of sowing to the flesh?

And if we sow to the Spirit?

3. **Write out** Romans 7:5:

Let's return to the tree again:

Since there was no doubt as to the condition of this tree now, I decided to just go ahead and dig it out and replace it with a new tree. As I began to dig around the area, I found it to be no problem at all to dig the tree out. There was no effort at all to lift it up and out (because the root system was unable to be established and anchor it solid). As I looked at the root ball, I was sure that I had discovered the problem. If you have had any experience at all with gardening, you may recognize right away the problem when you look at this picture.

The condition is called "root bound". All the roots were wrapped around itself. There were only a couple that were spread out as they should have been...not enough to maintain the health of the tree.



Right away, I was sure of what the Master Gardener was about to bring to my attention. Have you ever seen an individual that is all "wrapped up" in themselves? Perhaps you have even experienced this in your own life.

[2 Timothy 3:2 \(Amp\)](#) states:

"For people will be lovers of self and (utterly) self-centered, lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate (greedy) desire for wealth, proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffing), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane."

Verse 4 in the Amplified Bible states that "they will be inflated with self conceit" (perfect description of a person that is "root bound.")

1. How would you describe those who are lovers of self (other descriptive words)?
2. Boasters might be described as self assuring, valuing themselves beyond all others.
3. A conceited/high minded person is "full of themselves and empty of all good. Can you think of any other descriptions?"

4. Verse 4 states that they will be lovers of \_\_\_\_\_ rather than \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Pleasure, sensual gratification is their god, and this they love and serve.

[2 Timothy 3:13 \(Amp\)](#) states:

“But wicked men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived and led astray themselves.”

This is what happens to those (listed in this portion of Scripture). Just as contaminated soil will affect plants in the area of contamination, so will these individuals contaminate those around them.

**An example from the Word: Mark 10:35-37**

After reading this portion of Scripture, briefly explain what is going on in these verses and insights you see.

James and John seemed to be trying to exalt themselves. They wanted the highest authority and honor that could be given. They did not understand what they were asking but were asking out of their own speculation. It seems that they were looking at what Jesus could give them and give to their desires (a form of being wrapped up in oneself).

What is Christ’s way in order for our “roots” to be spread out, healthy and flourishing? **Look at Matthew 16:24** and write this out below.

[Galatians 5:24](#) also tells us about Christ’s way. Write this verse out.

[Romans 14:7 \(Amp\)](#) states:

“None of us lives to himself (but to the Lord), and none of us dies to himself (but to the Lord, for)

**Another example of a “root bound” person (from the Word):**

[Luke 12:16-21:- The Rich Fool](#)

His soul fed on his possessions and not at all in his relationship with the Lord. His possessions were for himself and not for God’s use. In verse 20, God calls him a \_\_\_\_\_.

[Luke 12:21 \(Amp\)](#) states:

“So it is with the one who continues to lay up and hoard possessions for himself and is not rich (in his relation) to God (this is how he fares).

Jesus gives us other exhortations on this very thing in [Matthew 6:19-20](#). In your own words, write out what He is saying to us in this portion.

Now! Let’s look at Christ’s way: [1 Corinthians 10:24 \(Amp\)](#) states:

“Let no one then seek his own good and advantage and profit, but (rather) each one of the other (let him seek the welfare of his neighbor).”

In verse 33 of 1 Corinthians 10, Paul expresses how he endeavors to have a concern for others above his own.

“Just as I myself strive to please (to accommodate myself to the opinions, desires and interests of others, adapting myself to) all men in everything I do, not aiming at or considering my own profit and advantage, but that of the many in order that they may be saved.”

Our example to the world should be just the opposite of the world which is depicted in the parable of the rich fool Jesus gave. The church of Acts operated in just that way. In Acts 4:34, 35 it states there was not a needy person among them. The distributions were made according to the need. There was spiritual unity. These Christians knew and felt what they had was not their own therefore they were able to give and share, eliminating poverty among them. They knew everything they had came from God. Their roots were deep and spread out.

Just as it was very easy for me to lift this little tree right up out of the soil, it is also very easy for Satan to come and lift us up and out if being “root bound” is a problem in our lives.

What is the condition of your “root system?” I’m sure I can join with others in saying that there may be some of my “root system” which needs to be worked on. I don’t always achieve to the degree of what I read in Acts Chapter 4, but my heart wants the Lord to bring me to that point. What about you? If you feel that this is also an area in your life that needs work, I encourage you to go before the Lord about it and even if you have someone you are accountable to, have them pray with you and keep you encouraged as your “root system” is developed and expanded.

#### [IN CLOSING: So what about the Japanese Maple tree?](#)

Well, another has taken the place of the more mature tree that was there. This one is younger and much like a new Christian, we start over again at nurturing, feeding, watering, and encouraging growth and proper development. Everything is being done for it that can be done, but once again no matter how much I pour into its life, the choice will be up to the little tree.

I am again reminded that we should never become discouraged when “pouring out our life” on behalf of others. Christ did that for all mankind. His love is so much greater than any amount of love we can show to others. I’m sure His heart breaks over the choices some people make in spite of His

life literally being poured out for them. It is my prayer that you won't be one of those but that your life will grow, develop and flourish and you will become like the trees described by the Psalmist:



[Psalm 1:3 \(Amp\):](#)

“And he (you) shall be like a tree firmly planted (and tended) by the streams of water, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not fade or wither; and everything he (you) does shall prosper (and come to maturity).”

GOD BLESS!