

Hello,

On behalf of the congregations of St. James, Grace & Ferguson Presbyterian Churches as well as our online platform New Hope Miramichi, I want to welcome you to part eight of our Summer Family Faith Series.

Today's message, "Freedom Roots" is the eighth message in our Summer Family Faith Series – ways that your family can integrate God more and more in your family circle, as you learn to plant deep spiritual roots that bring you and your family Freedom. – first, we start with Bible readings, then the message and then we provide you with online resources for the rest of the week.

My name is Colin Holmes I am the interim Pastor, here and I want to welcome you to this broadcast. No matter where you are – at home, at work, in the car; by yourself or with loved ones, I want you to hear every spoken word, I want you to ponder every word that is read – take it all in and know this: God loves you... God cared for you!

So, as we set aside time for Worship, let's be grateful to the Lord for His continuing grace and mercy in our lives, rooted in the very God we serve. As we gather together in person for worship, let's be thankful to God for this place, rooted in the very Scriptures we read, hear and live by. As we enter into His presence, let's deepen our relationship to Jesus Christ, the very root of our Salvation. To the Glory of God.

**Call to Worship: Psalm 80:7-18**

**7 Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. 8 You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. 9 You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. 10 The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. 11 Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. 12 Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? 13 Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it. 14 Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, 15 the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself. 16 Your vine is cut down; it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish. 17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. 18 Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.**

**Responsive Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-14**

**6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of**

anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. **13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.**

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 11:1-9

**1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—3** and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; **4** but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. **5** Righteousness will be his belt and

faithfulness the sash around his waist. 6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

**New Testament: Romans 11:13-21**

13 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry 14 in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. 15 For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 16 If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, **consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.** 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of

**unbelief, and you stand by faith.** Do not be arrogant, but tremble. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

## **Freedom Roots**

Many of the plants and trees that we see around us have a foundation that keeps them from blowing away in the wind. Whether that wind is a mild breeze or one of those crazy blustery kinds that can tear the leaves right off the trees, when a tree has a solid foundation, they can withstand some forces of the wind that you'd think would topple the tree, and yet it remains. That foundation is what we call roots. And, roots play an important role in the life of plants and trees. Of all of the differences we find in plants and trees, there are three significant areas that roots provide: 1. Roots provide nourishment 2. Roots provide an anchor 3. Roots prevent erosion. So, I want to use this analogy as a springboard for our time together as we explore freedom roots in our spiritual lives.

**1. Roots Provide Nourishment** – Romans 11:18-20 “, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.”

After Paul McAllister, my friend and Elder of our Ferguson congregation, passed away, I gave everyone at his funeral an apple seed to plant. But here's the thing about seeds: they are seeds... that is all they are. Without someone taking that seed and planting or sowing as the Bible describes the act of planting to us, a seed is just a seed. In your hand it will not do a thing. In the darkness of the soil, this is where it could transform. Now, keep in mind, that even planting or sowing the seed does not promise growth or transformation.

In the apple business that Paul was a farmer, the numbers are quite staggeringly low for starting an apple tree from seed. Not all seeds produce a tree and not all trees grow to produce fruit. That being said, it can be and as I have done this with the seeds provided to be from Paul's final crop, I have sown seed. However, that is only the beginning. But what starts as a seed, after cold stratification, becomes the root for the tree. The apple root is this white spirally looking shoot, that without the seed doing this, there would never be an apple tree. Why? Because the nourishment that comes from the soil, the water that comes through the ground, all provide the tree the essentials for the tree to grow and transform. And, over time, the deeper and wider the root system of the tree becomes, the more nourishment the tree gets from its roots. Without the roots, there would

be no tree, and without a tree there would be no fruit and without fruit there would be no seeds to plant. Everything for the apple tree, from its infancy to old age is provided by the roots.

The same goes for us in our spiritual lives. At some point, someone planted the seed of the Gospel into our lives. For some of us, the seeds took root and began in us a life that has changed and transformed us. We have not done the planting; we are simply the branches of the spiritual life or tree planted. The Bible says that Jesus is the vine in John 15, we are the branches. That is why it is important to understand the Bible verse associated with this point in my message. We are supported by the root, God, in our lives, that is where our physical and spiritual lives have their beginning. For so many, they don't give credit to the Creator for their physical life and miss the mark in their spiritual lives, believing things that will neither help them grow or transform them the way God intended. This particular Bible verse is speaking about the Jews and the Gentiles... we fall under the Gentile category, in other words, we were grafted into the tree by faith. That is, we have placed out faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit guiding our lives until Christ's return. The Jews were part of God's family because God made a covenant with them, and we Gentiles are part of the new covenant through Christ. But

unbelief will prevent Jews and Gentiles alike from being a living branch that the roots cannot support with nutrients and ultimately life.

**2. Roots Provide an Anchor** – Isaiah 11:1-2 “1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord...”

Have you ever tried to get a tree removed from your property? Have you seen after the tree has been cut down, that the roots still remain? Well, this is the picture that God is giving to the people of Israel. At one point they were cut off from the roots, and in the grace that only God can provide, he allowed a shoot to grow up from the stump that was left behind. The unbelievers were cut away from the tree and there only remained a remnant, the stump. And like anyone who has simply cut down a tree you know that life will again shoot up from the stump as long as the roots remain. In Israel's case, God did allow the roots to remain, this picture of promise was pretty ugly at first – no more branches, no more leaves or fruit. And yet, over time, God continued to do a work in the remaining part of the tree of the roots and stump, He provided a fulfillment to His promise that He would be the anchor of roots for His people. He will



provide the way for the people, even when things seem oh so terrible.

Again, we are seeing a picture of the God of the Covenant, the God who made a promise to His people, fulfilling that promise by providing a shoot – the shoot is a picture of life and that life is Jesus Christ. God was providing a way for life, but not just physical life, He was making a way for everlasting life supplies by the roots of God himself to the people of God. He would be their anchor to either grow from or in our case be grafted to for that life. All of this was God's promise made to the people of Israel in the Old Testament Covenant as well as the promise of the New Testament Covenant foretold in the book of Isaiah.

**3. Roots Prevent Erosion** – 2 Timothy 1:13-14 “13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

Living in the Miramichi, I have taken the time to walk the shoreline of the many branches of the Miramichi River. One of the things you get to see, in this most beautiful of places, are the many trees growing tightly to the shoreline. In God's creation He made a way for the land to remain intact, in many areas, by the root system of

these beautiful trees; whether they be evergreens or otherwise. As the trees mature and grow ever taller, their roots ever so deeper, it is as if the trees, seemingly sacrificing themselves for the sake of the land as their roots help protect the shoreline from erosion.

As Christians, the strength of our lives is truly dependant upon the roots we develop over time. Remember the parable of the sower? In that parable it speaks about the different types of soil that the seed is sown into. The seed representing the Gospel and the soil representing the life of an individual. As you read the entire story, you can't help but be horrified at the great number of seeds sown and the low number of seeds that take root, grow and produce fruit. Parents, grandparents, don't loose sight of this. Don't think for a moment that you only have to sow the seed of the Gospel once and it will take root. We as parents are compelled to be faithful sowers, sowing again and again over the same piece of ground. As labour intensive as this may be, it is what you and I are called to do. For reference for later, have a read of Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15.

So, what we must remind ourselves is that the roots aren't there to restrict us. Roots aren't there to prevent us from being free. In fact, quite the opposite. Roots are meant to set us free and grow the way God intended us. Root are there to ground us, protect us and provide us

with the nourishment we need when the storms come our way. The roots make it possible for you, and your children to endure storms that would otherwise wash us out. Later today, take a look at the tree on the New Hope Facebook page, see how the roots protect the ground and just how much life there is in the tree with a strong root system.

## **Conclusion**

When you understand that roots are there to provide nourishment, to provide an anchor and to prevent erosion, and you parallel this with your mental, physical and spiritual life – the life God wants you to live, then you will with certainty and confidence live knowing Freedom Roots. And no matter what happens in this life or the life to come, you are grounded, grafted and given all you will ever need.

Let's Pray

## **Benediction:** Colossians 2:6-7

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.