

ESSAY 1

On “the root of the righteous” in Proverbs 12:3

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To: Professor R. Russell Mack, Ph.D.

I have chosen the following three English translations to begin my study.

1. No one is established by wickedness But the root of righteousness will never be moved (ESV).
2. A man cannot be established through wickedness but the righteous cannot be uprooted (NIV).
3. No one can be made secure by wickedness But the root of the righteousness is immovable (CSB).

The ESV says that the “root of the righteous will never be moved”.

NIV says the “righteous cannot be uprooted”.

And the CBS says, “the root of the righteous is immovable”.

The NIV is using a dynamic equivalent and leaves out the word root, But the word can be seen in “cannot be uprooted”. At this point, I want to look at a fourth translation of the Message. “You can’t find firm footing in a swamp, but life rooted in God stands firm”. (Proverbs 12:3, The Message). The Message does a good job to bring out the passage in contemporary language. From these four versions, we can see that the root of the righteous as opposed to the wicked “will never be moved” (ESV), “cannot be uprooted” (NIV), “is immovable” (CSB), and will “stand firm” (The message). The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew lexicon on p 1057 says “root” in Proverbs 12:3 is taken from the masculine noun sores. Figuratively used of the root of a tree, “involving firmness, permanence”.

According to Strongs sores is the “root of a plant by extension: base or bottom of any object; source of a family line; the “Root of Jesse” is a messianic title; emphasizing Davidic origin: - root [16], roots [13].bottom [1] Page 1579 Strongs. Strongs adds to Brown, Driver and

Briggs definition and tells us that root is the “source of a family line, “the Root of Jesse” is a messianic title, emphasizing Davidic origin”. In Proverbs 12:3 we have to look at the source of “the root of the righteous”. The Message translation makes it clear that God is the righteous source.

According to Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible root is, “that part of the plant which penetrates the soil and draws up sap and nourishment for the plant. The numerous references to roots in the Bible (Heb, sores, Gk. Rhiza are mostly figurative. Drawn from the important relation which the root bear to the plant. Roots near water symbolize prosperity (Job 29:19; Ezek.317); the opposite is a “withered” root (Hos 9:16). A root growing old in the ground (Job 14:8) signifies loss of vitality, while: to take root or “be rooted” denotes becoming or being firmly established (2 Ki.19:30; Eph.317). Judgment upon sinners is pictured as rottenness of root (Isa.5:24), roots drying up (Job 18:16; Isa. 14:30) or being uprooted in destruction (Ezek. 17:9, Lk 17:6; Jude 12). The ax lying at the root of the tree indicates impending judgment (Matt 3:10). The root is the source of a moral or spiritual condition. Thus, the love of money is pictured as “a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10), while a “bitterroot” causes the defilement of apostasy (Heb 12:15, cf Deut. 29:18)”.

“The root of a family or nation is its progenitor (Rom.11:6. MESSIAH as the “Root of Jesse” (Isa.11:10) is not a mere shoot from the root but himself, the origin and strength of the Messianic line, “the Root and the Offspring of David” (Rev. 22:16 cf 5:5) denotes Christ’s divine-human nature as the source and descendant of David. The messianic servant’s appearance as a “root out of the dry ground” (Isa. 53:2) depicts his lowly surroundings in contrast to his inner vigor”.

Keil and Delitzsch contrast the wicked in Proverbs 12:3a with the righteous in Proverbs 12:3b. In the wicked “there lies the idea of want of inward stay (vid’, at Ps 1:1); in a manner of thought and of conduct which has no stay in God and His law, there can be expected no external endurance, no solidity. The righteous on the contrary have their root in God; nothing can tear them from the ground in which they are rooted. They are as trees which no storm outroots. The very same thought is clothed in other words in 10:25, and another statement regarding the root of the righteous is found at 12:12”.

Keil and Deilitzsch bring up this recurring theme that the righteous “have their root in God”. God is the righteous person’s source. He supplies the nourishment that we need to endure and storm! In Proverbs 12:12 we see that the “root of the righteous can never be moved”, we see that “the root of the righteous bears fruit” (ESV). (Keil and Delitzsch). Proverb 10:25 is a commentary on Proverbs 12:3 “when the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever”.

We see from these three Proverbs that:

1. The righteous can never be moved (Prov. 12:3).
2. The righteous bear fruit (Prov. 12:12).
3. The righteous is established forever (Prov. 10:25).

Jesus is the “root and descendant of David” Isaiah 11:10 is a fitting close to this study on the word root in the Old Testament. “In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples - of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious (Isa. 11:10ESV) “I am the root and the descendent of David, the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

Bibliography

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