

Matthew 13:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Analysis

Yet hath he not root in himself (οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ)—no deep tap root connecting to water and nutrients. The problem is internal, not external; the issue is character, not circumstances. **Dureth for a while** (πρόσκαιρός ἐστίν)—proskairos means 'temporary, lasting only for a season.' True faith perseveres (Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:14).

When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word (θλίψεως ἢ διωγμοῦ)—external pressure reveals internal reality. **By and by he is offended** (εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται)—skandalizō means 'to cause to stumble, fall away.' Immediately, without resistance, the shallow believer abandons Christ when following Him costs something. The rocky-ground hearer loves benefits but won't bear the cross; wants blessing without sacrifice; seeks a crown without suffering.

Historical Context

First-century Christian persecution was immediate and intense—excommunication from synagogue (John 9:22), loss of employment, family rejection (Matthew 10:34-36), imprisonment, martyrdom (Acts 7:54-60). Many who initially responded to Jesus's ministry abandoned Him when costs became clear (John 6:66). The early church experienced this constantly, making this warning pastorally urgent for Matthew's readers.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'tribulation or persecution' tests reveal whether your faith has genuine root?
2. How can you develop deep spiritual roots that sustain faith through suffering?
3. Where might you be 'offended' by Christ's demands—tempted to fall away when following Him costs something?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ	ἔχει	δὲ	ρίζαν	ἐν	ἑαυτῷ	ἀλλὰ	πρόσκαιρός	ἐστίν
not	hath he	Yet	root	in	himself	but	for a while	dureth
G3756	G2192	G1161	G4491	G1722	G1438	G235	G4340	G2076
γενομένης	δὲ	θλίψεως	ἢ	διωγμοῦ	διὰ	τὸν		
ariseth	Yet	when tribulation	or	persecution	because			G3588
G1096	G1161	G2347	G2228	G1375	G1223			
λόγον	εὐθὺς	σκανδαλίζεται						
of the word	by and by	he is offended						
G3056	G2117	G4624						

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 11:6 (Parallel theme): And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Hosea 6:4 (Parallel theme): O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

Job 19:28 (Parallel theme): But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?

Proverbs 12:3 (Parallel theme): A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Ephesians 3:17 (Parallel theme): That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Psalms 36:3 (Word): The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good.

Proverbs 12:12 (Parallel theme): The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

Mark 4:17 (Word): And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

Romans 2:7 (Parallel theme): To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

Matthew 24:13 (Parallel theme): But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.