

The Sower

*"Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?
Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"*
¹⁵ *He who walks righteously
and speaks what is right,
who rejects gain from extortion
and keeps his hand from accepting bribes,
who stops his ears against plots of murder
and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil-*
¹⁶ *this is the man who will dwell on the heights,
whose refuge will be the mountain fortress.
His bread will be supplied,
and water will not fail him.*
¹⁷ *Your eyes will see the king in his beauty
and view a land that stretches afar.*

Isaiah, Chapter 34

¹*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ²Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear."*

¹⁸*"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²²The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Matthew, Chapter 13

INTRODUCTION

1. The central message of the Gospels is that the Kingdom of God is coming, ushered by the person Jesus of Nazareth. As Jesus spoke this message, it was not always warmly received.
 - a. Even when he did miracles, some would not listen - Mt 11:20-24

- b. Others tried to trap or trick him. - Mt 12:9-14
- Therefore, Jesus began to speak in parables. - Mt 13:10-13

2. Jesus was dealing with people who had the ability to hear but not listen.- Mt 13:14-15

3. The parable of the sower illustrates that people can hear but not listen nor receive the actual message. God changes his method of communication to assure the people have a chance to actually hear. This reveals something foundational to personality of God—he will go to great lengths to reach a population that ignores him or cannot “hear” him. It is God who does the reaching.

-- It was told by Jesus to illustrate different reactions to the gospel message

4. The parable of the sower is extra special because it is one of the few where Jesus explains the meaning of the parable. Therefore, if you can't get this one, then you probably won't understand much of anything. The significance of this particular parable is enhanced by the words of Jesus recorded in Mk 4:13... ¹³*Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"*

I. What does the parable mean?

A. "THE SOWER"... Not specifically identified in this parable...however, look at Mt 13:37, the explanation of "The Parable Of The Wheat And The Weeds" in which Jesus explains "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man." The "sower" in this parable had immediate reference to Jesus

B. "THE SEED"...

1. The seed is "the word of the kingdom" - Mt 13:19a
2. I.e., the gospel of the kingdom, which was the theme of Jesus' preaching - Mt 4:23

C. "THE Path"

1. This soil represents one who "hears...and does not understand" - Mt 13:19a
2. Could these be those who have hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word - cf. Mt 13:15? Hearing the surprising Word of God can be confusing. People want to read into the Gospel, not hear what it actually says.
3. The "birds" represent "the wicked one" (called "the devil" in Lk 8:12)
 - a. Who snatches away the Word from those whose hearts are hardened.
 - b. Their condition therefore is one of being "blinded" by Satan to the gospel - 2 Co 4:3-4
4. While Satan contributes to their blindness, it is precipitated by their own hardness of heart!

D. "THE Rocky Soil" (The Second Soil)...

1. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "hears the word and immediately receives it with joy" - Mt 13:20
 - b. "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while" - Mt 13:21a
 - c. "when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" - Mt 13:21b

2. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy...
 - a. But with no root, they are not grounded in the Word
 - b. So that when troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs
3. Here we learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution

E. "AMONG THE THORNS" (The Third Soil)...

1. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "hears the word" - Mt 13:22a
 - b. But whose ability to bear fruit is choked by:
 - 1) "the cares of this world" - Mt 13:22b
 - 2) "the deceitfulness of riches" - Mt 13:22c
 - 3) "pleasures of life" (added in Lk 8:14)
2. How these three "thorns" can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of God's Word...
 - a. The cares of this world
 - 1) Can cause us to be unprepared - cf. Lk 21:34-36
 - 2) The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can detract our minds from what is truly important - cf. Lk 12:29-32
 - b. The deceitfulness of riches
 - 1) The danger is described in 1 Ti 6:9-10
 - 2) Again, the evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient - 1 Ti 6:17
 - c. Pleasures of life
 - 1) Those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit - cf. Ga 5:17
 - 2) Sowing to the flesh make it impossible to reap of the Spirit! - Ga 6:7-9

F. "THE GOOD GROUND" (The Fourth Soil)...

1. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "hears the word and understands it" - Mt 13:23a
 - b. "indeed bears fruit and produces" - Mt 13:23b
 - b. Luke adds that he hears "the word with a noble and good heart", and then "keeps it and bears fruit with patience" - Lk 8:15
2. Those with "a noble and good heart", then, are the ones...
 - a. Who will understand the Word
 - b. Who will keep it, and with patience produce fruit in their lives!
3. They will be like the Bereans, who were commended for being "fair-minded", as manifested in the way they:
 - a. "received the word with all readiness"
 - b. "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" - Ac 17:11
4. Note the importance of "understanding" in relation to "bearing

fruit"...

- a. Jesus made the connection between the two in this parable
- Mt 13:23
 - b. Paul connects the two when he writes of the gospel producing fruit among the Colossians "since the day they heard (NASV says "understood") the grace of God in truth"
- Co 1:5-6
-- When one "understands", they will more likely "bear fruit"; but the key to understanding is having a "good and noble heart" that is willing to listen and learn!
5. And what kind of "fruit" will one bear? There are different kinds...
- a. The fruit of winning souls to Christ - Ro 1:13
 - b. The fruit of practical holiness - Ro 6:22
 - c. The fruit of sharing material things - Ro 15:27
 - d. The fruit of the Spirit (i.e., a Christ-like character)
- Ga 5:22-23
 - e. The fruit of good works - Co 1:10
 - f. The fruit of praise & thanksgiving - He 13:15
6. An important observation is that not all will bear the same amount...
- a. "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" - Mt 13:23
 - b. As illustrated in The Parable of the Talents, some may be given more according to their ability to use what God has given them - Mt 25:14-15
 - c. Whatever our ability, we should exercise it accordingly
- cf. 1 Pe 4:10-11

II. APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

A. ARE YOU LIKE "THE PATH"?

1. If you have heard the gospel of Christ and His kingdom, but are not yet a Christian...
2. You may be in the process of hardening your heart the longer you wait!
3. You are susceptible to Satan's deception in some form, to blind you and not allow the Word of God to have its intended effect!

B. ARE YOU LIKE "THE ROCKY SOIL"?

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are not being grounded in the faith...
2. You will likely fall away when persecution or temptation comes your way!

C. ARE YOU LIKE THE SOIL "AMONG THE THORNS"?

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are becoming too preoccupied with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world...
2. You will not be able to bear much fruit!
-- And remember what Jesus said about branches that don't bear fruit! - Jn 15:1-6

D. ARE YOU LIKE "THE GOOD SOIL"?

1. If you have responded to the gospel, and are bearing fruit...
2. Then you have demonstrated several important things:
 - a. You have a good and noble heart!
 - b. You have come to understand the Word!
 - c. You have been keeping it with patience!
3. And so the Word of God has been able to produce its intended effect in you!

CONCLUSION

1. When Jesus finished telling His parable of the Sower, He cried out:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" - Mt 13:9
2. Clearly from the explanation of Jesus Himself, we learn that not all those who have ears to hear, really listen!
3. It is important that we listen well when God's Word is being proclaimed, for that is how faith is obtained - Ro 10:17
4. How well have YOU listened to this parable of Jesus and His explanation?
 - a. If you are anything other than that like "the good soil", you need to repent today!