

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

November 24, 2019

The Parable of The Sower

"And when a great multitude had gathered and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: (5) A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. (6) Some fell on a rock, and as soon as it was sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. (7) And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. (8) But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundred fold. When He had said these things He cried, He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:4-8).

The verses just cited constitute what is commonly called "The Parable of the Sower." It has also been called "The Parable of the Four Soils," and "The Parable of the Seed." A little investigation reveals why this parable is variously designated. It mentions a "**a sower**" who "went out to sow his **seed**," Luke 8:5. It mentions **four** different types of soil into which the seed fell; hence, some refer to it as "the parable of the soils." It also mentions the "**seed**" which was sown into the different types of soil; thus others refer to it as the "parable of the seed."

In these scriptures is contained Luke's account of this parable. It is also recorded in Matt. 13:3-9 and Mark 4:3-9. It is perhaps the best known of the around 30 recorded parables which were presented by Jesus, "the Master Teacher." One of the great benefits of this parable is the fact that the Lord not only presented the parable; He also gave its interpretation, as can be documented by reading Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20; and Luke 8:11-15. Hence, by reading the Lord's interpretation of this parable, we are thereby benefitted when we seek to understand the meaning of His parables in general.

It seems that the immediate background of this parable is best seen by looking to Matt. 13:1-2 wherein we observe that Jesus went out of the house and "*sat by the sea,*" at which time "*great multitudes were gathered together to Him,*" making it wise for him to get "*into a boat,*" and to speak "*while the multitude stood on the shore.*" Then Jesus "*spoke by a parable*" (Luke 8:4), the first parable presented being "the Parable of the Sower."

In a few words, it could be said that this parable tells the story of a sower who went out to sow seed into the soil, and the contrasting results of the seed sown being determined by the condition, and type, of soil into which it was sown. In each instance, we have the **same sower**, and the **same seed** being sown, but the results differed — which, being interpreted, depicts different reactions to the gospel message. However, we deem it proper to examine this parable

more closely.

The Parable Explained

1. **“A Sower,”** Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:3; Luke 8:5. This “*sower*” is not identified by name. However, in this same general context, Jesus also presented the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), and in His explanation of that parable (Matt. 13:36-43), He stated that “*He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man*” (Matt. 13:37). Hence, we could safely state that the “*sower*” herein mentioned has immediate reference to Jesus Christ. However, by way of application, it could be said that the “*sower*” would be any person who proclaims the gospel of Christ in its original purity and simplicity. With this in mind, we sometimes sing the song, “Are You Sowing the Seed of the Kingdom.” And it is a fact that every Christian, in various ways, should be sowing that “*seed*,” or sharing God’s word with others.

2. **“The seed.”** After Jesus had presented this parable, His disciples asked him, saying, “*what does this parable mean,*” Luke 8:9. In His explanation, Jesus began by saying, “*now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God*” (Luke 8:11). In Matthew’s account, He referred to the “*seed*” as being “*the word of the kingdom*” (Matt. 13:19). Hence “*the word of God*” being proclaimed to precious souls is likened to “*seed*” sown into the soil of human hearts. This reminds us of I Peter 1:23 wherein Peter referred to the original recipients of that epistle as people “*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.*” Yes, God’s word is referred to as “*seed*,” yea, even to “*incorruptible seed!*”

3. **“The Wayside”** (the first soil mentioned). Jesus said “*some seed fell by the wayside*” (Matt. 13:4; Mk. 4:4; Lk. 8:5). This would refer to the hardened, or beaten path alongside the margin of the field, soil left unplowed, making it more convenient for the farmer going to his work. Instead of actually entering the soil, Jesus said “*the birds came and devoured them*” (Matt. 13:4), and in his explanation of this statement, He said “*the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart*” (Matt. 13:19). “*The wicked one*” of this verse is called “*Satan*” in Mark 4:15, and “*the devil*” in Luke 8:12. More specifically, the “*wayside*” soil is identified as “*anyone*” who “*hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it*” (Matt. 13:19). Contextually, this applies to people, who prior to hearing the word, have already hardened their hearts (Matt. 13:13-15). Regardless of how simple the gospel message is, it is practically impossible to make a person understand the truth if he does not possess “*the love of the truth*” (2 Thess. 2:10), for he has allowed Satan, “*the god of this age*” (2 Cor. 4:4) to blind him to the truth.

4. **The “stony places”** (Matt. 13:3), or “*stony ground*” (Mark 4:5), or “*rock*” (Luke 8:6). This is not solid “*rock*,” but rock upon which is covered a thin layer of soil. This represents one who hears the word and “*immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while,*” but who “*stumbles*” when tribulation or persecution comes (Matt. 13:20-21).

5. **The “thorns”** (Matt. 13:7; Mark 4:7; Luke 8:7). This represents those who hear the word, but who are “*choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity*” (Luke 8:14). Ground which will grow corn will also grow thorns, but it can’t very well grow both corn and thorns! Many a person has been “*baptized into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27), was raised to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:3-4), and had every intention of growing and maturing as Christians should. But they became “*choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life*” (Luke 8:14) and, even though they had so much potential, they fall away. And you can be sure that Satan is waiting for them with open arms! (cf. I Peter 5:8-9).

6. **The “good ground”** (Matt. 13:8; Mark 4:8; Lk. 8:8)). The “*good ground are those*

who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience” (Lk. 8:15). They have a “*noble (“honest,” KJV) and good heart;*” like the Bereans, they receive “*the word with all readiness of mind,*” and they search “*the scriptures daily to find out*” if what they have “*heard is true*” (Acts 17:11). These are the ones who “*bear fruit with patience*” (Luke 8:15), even “*an hundred fold*” in some instances (Luke 8:8),

Personal Application

With regards to this parable, in each instance, we have the **same sower** sowing the **same seed**, so the difference in results had to do with the soil — not with the seed, or the seed sower. This brings us to a very important question, it being “**what kind of soil is the soil of your heart?**”

1. Are you like the “wayside” hearers; in other words, have you heard the gospel, but have allowed the devil to hinder you from obeying the truth?

2. Are you like the “stony ground” hearers — that is, have you obeyed the gospel, but have never become rooted and grounded in the faith, and are therefore likely to fall away when tribulation, temptation, or persecution comes your way.

3. Is the soil of your heart like the seed which fell “among thorns?” That is, have you become so caught up with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, that you don’t really find time to worship and serve the Lord?

4. Is the soil of your heart “good ground?” That is, do you have a “*noble and honest heart,*” evidenced by having come to an understanding of the word, followed by obedience to the gospel, and a strong determination to bear fruit with patience?

Conclusion: It is interesting that when Jesus concluded this parable He said “*who hath ears to hear, let him hear*” (Matt. 13:9). He spoke this parable to “*great multitudes*” (Matt. 13:2), but He concluded it with a sincere appeal to **each individual** in His audience. So it is today; the gospel is for all, but no one should wait for others to act before he/or she resolves to obey the Lord. We will be judged individually (2 Cor. 5:10); we must act individually! Your soul is too precious, eternity is too long, hell is too horrible, and heaven is too wonderful for you, if you know the truth, to put off obedience to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ!

**** —B. Witherington