

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

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Matt 13:1-9

13:1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

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Matt 13:18-23

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When 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. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The 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. 23 But 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."

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This parable is rich in meaning. It was told by Jesus to teach us that the attention one gives to the word of God determines his level of fruitfulness.

From this parable, we see that there are four groups of people. The first group, are the people who did not profit from the word of God for lack of understanding. The second group, are those whose hearts are so hardened that the initial word of salvation which they heard and believed could not prosper as expected. The third group, are people who the cares of this world would not allow to concentrate on their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The fourth group, are people whose heart are open to the Lord, and as a result are able to bear good fruit.

I am going to examine closely these four groups so that you can identify which category you fall into, and to relocate yourself to the best category.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

The farmer's seed fell on the pathway, and the birds of the air came and ate them up. They didn't have the chance to grow at all. Jesus in explaining it, said the birds represent Satan, and he succeeded in stealing the seeds (God's word) away because the hearers did not understand what was spoken.

Reasons why people do not understand the word of God

1. They don't show enough interest either while the message is being preached or taught or after they have been ministered to.
2. Manifestation of nonchalant attitude to God and His word.
3. Absence of interest in matters of religion and salvation.
4. A biased mind about Christianity either due to religious belief, preconceived notions, ideologies or superstitious beliefs.

There is a need for everyone to seek to understand what the word of God is saying on any and every subject. Without understanding, absolute or strong faith is impossible. It is impossible to believe with all your heart what you do not understand. And people don't understand because they don't give attention when the word of God is coming to them. You need to concentrate when you are reading or studying the word of God. Radio and television and music can be a very big distraction when studying the word of God. Maximum concentration is required if the word of God must profit you.

Having a conversation with another person while you are studying or listening to the word of God in church or elsewhere is not good. It is a distraction. And there is no way you can fully comprehend what you are reading or being taught.

Most Christians don't concentrate while the word is being preached to them in church. Some will be in service, but their minds are far away from what is going on in church. You have to bring your mind under captivity of the Holy Spirit for you to benefit from the word of God.

God appointed Pastors and Teachers in the church so they can teach His people so that understanding can be reached. If understanding is not important, there will be no need for teachers. Give attention to what you hear and read. Seek to understand so that you can profit from what is heard and read.

Prov 4:20-21

20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. 21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;

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Prov 4:7

7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

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Prov 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

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THE ROCKY HEART

The second group, are the people who when they heard the gospel the first time, understood it and believed. So they began their relationship with Jesus Christ, but their relationship didn't last because the rocks in their hearts did not allow the word to prosper.

The rocks in the heart can be described as strongholds. And these strongholds are:

1. Religious beliefs
2. Preconceived notions
3. Superstitious beliefs
4. False doctrines
5. Unbelief
6. Wrong attitude to the word of God.
7. Wrong ideologies

When any or all of these are present, it is difficult for the word of God to prosper. These things resist the word of God because they have been there a long time. They have become so strong that Jesus likens them to a rocky soil.

There are two ways of overcoming this problem. If this problem is not dealt with immediately, the believer who falls into this category will eventually fall away as the battle gets tougher - as temptations trials and problems come their way.

1. Give yourself to more of God's word

Jer 23:29

29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

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The word of the Lord to Jeremiah declares that God's word is a hammer and has the ability to break rocks in pieces. So to overcome a rocky heart, you need to give yourself to the word of God. The more you hear the word of God, the more you understand God's opinion on the subjects you already hold strong opinion. The more you study and hear God speak, the clearer things become. As this is going on, the rocks and strongholds are breaking up. As the light of God is shining on the darkened areas of your heart, so the hardened areas are softening up. And as that is taking place, the word of God is taking root in the heart, faith is getting stronger and the believer is getting more and more established.

To overcome wrong religious beliefs, ideologies, preconceived notions, superstitious beliefs, false doctrines, unbelief and wrong attitude, you need to give yourself to the study of the scripture and listen to anointed teachings that will enlighten you in the word of God.

2. Pull down the strongholds in the heart through prayer

2 Cor 10:4-5

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

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You the believer must accept that previous beliefs resulting in wrong mentality are strongholds. And the second way of demolishing it is through prayers. You must exercise authority over it by constantly pulling them down and destroying all arguments and imaginations against Christ in the name of Jesus Christ. Spiritual warfare is very important if your heart must become fertile for the word of God to prosper.

The essence of this parable, I believe, is for each person to understand himself and seek to be better placed in order to benefit from the word of God. And that is why this teaching is coming to you to explain the parable further so you can benefit from the parable.

Be determined to destroy every rock or stronghold in your life by giving yourself more to the word of God and through prayer, pull down every stronghold.

CARES FOR THE WORLD

The third group, are the people who received the gospel of Jesus Christ with joy, but, their attachment to the world choke the word such that it became unfruitful – they didn't grow very well and gave up along the way – not significant change in their lives because of their attachment to the things of this world.

The word of God is meant to change the hearer. The life of the one who receives it is expected to be so transformed that all can see the visible change, at the end, will end up at the bosom of the Father. It takes singleness of mind to make it. A man who is double minded cannot make it. Worldly mindedness is double mindedness. It is a big distraction. The cares of this world or worldly mindedness will not allow any person to prosper in his relationship with Christ.

James 4:4-5

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

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Friendship with the world is enmity with God because they are two opposing kingdoms. Satan, the ruler of the world is opposed to God and His kingdom. So when a person decides for Christ, he must not become worldly minded or else, his desire for and attachment to the world will overcrowd or choke his faith and make it impossible for him to grow well. When a plant is overcrowded by thorns, the plant after sometime dies, so also the relationship of the believer with Jesus Christ will die if the believer is worldly minded.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

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If you too attached to what to eat, wear, money and material things, you will find it difficult to grow in Christ. If you are ever going to make it in Christ, you must learn to be content with what God permits you to have or possess at every given point in time. If you do not know how to be grateful in contentment, you will be sorrowful. Too much attachment to the things of this world and wealth is the doom of many Christians. Always remember that He loved you enough to die for you in order that you may live. He cares and will always provide all your needs. Lovingly trust Him and He will never disappoint you. Concentrate always on your relationship with Jesus and nothing more. Let God be your first priority in life. Seek Him first and all other things will be added to you.

Matt 6:28-34

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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THE FERTILE HEART

The fourth and last group, are the people whose hearts are open to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word. Their hearts are fertile for the seeds of God's word to germinate and bring forth fruit.

Amongst these people, we also see that the level of yieldedness of each individual determines the amount of fruitfulness, hence, thirty, sixty and hundredfold fruiting. A

man's attitude to the word of God he hears determines his level of fruit bearing. Ten people may hear a particular message and receive the same prayer, but only two or three will come back with testimonies. And if you check the testimonies, you will also discover that one is weightier than the other. This is as a result of their different level of reception and appropriation of the word heard and received.

Your level of yieldedness to the word of God though your heart is fertile, always determines your level of fruitfulness. The way you attend to the word of God determines whether it will produce in your life or not, and if it will, the percentage of fruitfulness. Therefore, give your whole heart to the word of God always, so that the desire of God for your life will be achieved. The degree of renewal of the mind by the word of God determines the degree of transformation (change of character) in your life. Never forget that.

Rom 12:1-2

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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CONCLUSION

Each time God speaks, he expects a positive response from the hearer.

Heb 3:7-9

7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.

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Luke 12:47-48

47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

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Whenever you are studying the word of God, or listening to the word of God in the church, at home, or any other place, pay attention. Apply your mind to understanding. Pull down every stronghold in your life through prayer. Don't be worldly minded. Don't let the cares of this world and riches to distract you. Learn to be content with the blessings and favour God shows you daily. Yield yourself totally to the word of God. Practice every principle or law of God in faith and God will prove His word in your life as being true.

Always remember that your attitude and level of yieldedness to the word of God determines whether you will bear fruit or not, and if you will, the level of fruitfulness. You are the one who decides the size of the cup with which you are blessed through your response to the word of God.