

Because They Had No Root

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER—Matt. 13; Mark 4

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God"—Psalm 84:2

THIS verse expresses the way we SHOULD be at all times in the service of God. Truly, we recognize this, but unfortunately we find ourselves always wandering from the ways of right.

Each day as we go about our several duties we are busy with thoughts of the world—thoughts about our business—thoughts of what we will do next with our lives and where we will go and what we will do.

We are constantly filling up our lives with a lot of things which seem important but which, when examined, really are very shallow. Actually, if we were to honestly tabulate the way we spend our time from day to day, we would find most of it is spent on these trivial and less important things.

This is where we need help. It is not easy, and will never be easy. The way of Truth and Righteousness was never meant to be easy for human flesh, but it is glorious and has great joy and reward.

The easy way is the way of the flesh—the way that the world is constantly going. It is from this way that we must separate ourselves. We must always be trying to do better in the ways of the Truth.

The Truth is, must be, a very strong bond in all of our lives. We are constantly made aware of this fact. When talking about religion with friends they almost always ask why we travel so much. Our work in the Truth draws us close together and the love in the Truth is often far greater than those of our immediate families.

And so it should be. If our own relatives do not accept the Truth we have no real ties with them. We cannot feel the warmth of being one with them. On having them over for an evening, they are not interested in the reading of God's Word, but most often prefer the relaxations and pleasures of the world.

If we are not careful, a constant association like this can stagnate us and make us weak in the Truth and starving for the spiritual food. This is our most important food which is essential in our daily diet. As we can get malnutrition from not eating the right natural foods, the same applies to our spiritual food.

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WE have recently completed the Gospel of Matthew and in this Gospel we have many good lessons taught by Christ to the people of Israel in the form of parables. One of the first of these is the Parable of the Sower, which he spoke to the people as he sat by the sea of Galilee (Matt. 13).

This part of the land was hilly and not good farm land, as we would call good farm land. Around Ontario and Michigan it is relatively flat and good land to raise crops, but in much of Israel there are patches of good and bad land all in the same field, which would probably be on a hillside. When taking the area into mind, the parable has much more meaning for us.

"Some seed fell by the wayside (that would be on a pathway) and the fowls came and devoured them up.

"Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.

"And when the sun was up they were scorched and because they had no root, they withered away.

"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

"But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit—some a hundredfold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold" (vs. 4-8).

This parable illustrates a lot about how people in general differ. People can't always be the way we want them to be, nor do they do the things that we expect they should do. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Not all people are suited to the Word of God.

For most, the bright and gay and thoughtless living of the world has far, far more appeal than a Book about what God wants us to do, and how He desires us to control and overcome our natural inclinations because of love for Him.

Christ is telling us here in this parable that the Word of God is spread far and wide in the form of the seed. The Word of God, as the Bible, is in most people's homes today and has been a best seller for a long long time. But the fact that people have a Bible will not save them. They have to DO what it says they must do. If they do not, they are in God's sight "dead."

This is the group of people that the Word or "seed" was first thrown to. They had no use for it, so it just died in their midst. The Word cannot flourish amongst unbelievers.

The next group were those that fell into the stony ground where there wasn't much earth. They sprang up, but when the sun came up they withered away. Here is Christ's explanation of them—

"He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and with joy receiveth it.

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

How many of us could stand up under much tribulation and trials? In this country, we are indeed very fortunate not to have the persecution that is prevalent in many countries today, and which many faithful brethren and sisters have suffered in the past.

If we were put to a real test of our faith—to the loss of all our goods—to separation from our loved ones—to bodily injury and abuse—how many of us could hold fast, and be true to God, and also keep the right spirit of thankfulness, love and forgiveness?

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the Word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful."

This man is like the previous, in that he was overcome and became dead to the Truth. Unlike the other case, he wasn't zealous to begin with. This man heard the Word of God and knew what God wanted and expected of him, but was carried away with the things of this world. Paul says (2 Cor. 4:3-4):

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

The Word is only meant for those who will hear and do it. There are millions in this world today for which the Word is not meant. They are indeed blinded, as Paul says, to Gospel things. But we rejoice that—

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

We indeed hope and pray that we are of the latter seed which hears the Word and is faithful to it in all things—

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and **understandeth** it, which also **beareth** fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Again this same parable comes up in our reading in the next few days in Mark. It also is the first parable in Mark. In this chapter (Mark 4), we have many other good lessons to take heed of. Just before this parable, in ch. 3, was this incident:

"There came then his brethren and his mother, and standing without, sent unto him calling him.

"And the multitude sat about him, and they said,

"Behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

"And he answered them saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

"And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said,

"Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

If we are the true brethren and sisters of Christ, we will try at all times to do the will of our Father, which is in heaven. This is often very hard for most of us to do.

God also realizes this. He knows our weaknesses and our infirmities, and that we are weak mortal creatures.

Paul gives us some comforting but also solemnly warning thoughts along this line in 1 Cor. 10, where he is talking of the wandering of Israel and the lessons that we should learn from their wrong doings—

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea . . ."

He is impressing them with the fact that just **beginning**—just being "in the Truth"—is not enough—

"And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

"And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

All Israel entered the Mosaic covenant, and THOUGHT they were God's people—

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

they "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as also lusted . . .

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."

We "tempt Christ"—test his mercy and patience—whenever we do anything we know we should not do.

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

And he brings home the lesson, and the reason these things were recorded—

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

There is never room for carelessness or relaxation of effort. But he also gives us the assuring guarantee that—

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

This way of escape is Christ, as he further relates in the chapter. It brings our minds to the emblems before us this morning. We should always keep these in mind in all that we do. Paul is exhorting us here in telling us of Israel's relationship in the purpose, and how it related to Christ. He goes on further in the same chapter to emphasize the need for separation from all that is out of harmony with God—

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

Many get discouraged when they think of the responsibilities that we take on when we accept the Truth and are baptized. Indeed we DO have great responsibilities, but if we do not accept them, we will be far worse.

We will always fall far short of our desired mark of perfection in the Truth, but that is no excuse for giving up, and not trying our best and hardest to please God. Paul, writing to the Romans, puts this very well—

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

with "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

"For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

He is not condoning and making excuses for wrongdoing, as some take this to mean, for he plainly says in the next chapter (Rom. 8:13) that if we "live after the flesh" we shall die, but if we by the Spirit **put to death the deeds of the body**, we shall live.

Rather he is describing the great struggle all must constantly face. He continues—

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And then he gives the glorious answer to it all—

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

This law of sin will always be with us and warring in our members.

He concluded by thanking God for the deliverance from sin and death, and this is something that we should always be doing—giving thanks and praise to God Who giveth all things. A joyful, thankful frame of mind is well-pleasing to God, and it helps us to overcome.

He has shown us the wonderful ways of right and truth and salvation. Therefore we should openly manifest our faith by our works and our actions. It is by our actions that men of the world in

our daily contact will judge us. If we hide the Truth they will think we are part of them, and indeed we would be. We are called out to be separate from their ways, to do the ways of God rather than men's ways.

After Christ had finished the parable of the sower, he said—

"Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

"For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad."

God also knows the hearts of each and every one of us. There is no escaping His presence. We are placed here for a purpose, and we must fulfil this purpose to the best of the ability God has given us, and WILL give us, if we seek Him. In regard to this, Paul is very clear and emphatic as he sums up in that same letter (Rom. 12:1-2)—

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Are our lives God's, and our bodies living sacrifices? —

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Each one of us differs in our ability, and each will have to account to God for the ways in which we used the talents He has given us—

"For to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath."

We must constantly strive to use our time wisely and not fall into the pleasure seeking of the world, if we are to be amongst the seed which fell on good ground and which was found acceptable at the great harvest.

—F.J.H.