

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

⁴When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable^a. ⁵“The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up^b. ⁶Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture^c. ⁷Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out^d. ⁸Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great^e.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear^f.”

⁹His disciples *began* questioning Him as to what this parable meant^g. ¹⁰And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND^h.”

^a 8:4 **When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable.** The people had heard about the miracles of Jesus and doubtless came to either see one or receive one. He certainly was compassionate to those in need but getting the kingdom message required teaching more than it required miracles.

He spoke a parable as a teaching tool, evidently allowing the story itself to soak in without any explanation.

^b 8:5 **The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.** This is a reference to broadcasting seeds rather than drilling them. Some seeds very naturally land where they will be eaten or destroyed.

^c 8:6 **Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.** Rocks and poor soil where no water is absorbed cannot sustain germinated seeds.

^d 8:7 **Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.** Some seeds grow but cannot survive the competition for food and water.

^e 8:8 **Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.** A wheat plant that produced one hundred seeds would have been an abundant harvest.

^f 8:8 **As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** The verb translated “He would call out” is in the imperfect tense. This past continuing action means that Jesus said this more than once. He was like the farmer scattering seeds and periodically calling out, “Do you understand what I am saying? Do you understand what I am saying?”

^g 8:9 **His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant.** Evidently only a few wanted to pursue the meaning of the parable. This is usually the way it is when the gospel is preached. Only a few in each crowd has hungry ears.

^h 8:10 **To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.** Notice the contrast between the two audiences: “you” and “the rest.” Jesus was quoting Isaiah:

Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed. Isaiah 6:10

The mysteries of the kingdom are not “mysterious” by our definition of the word. In Scripture mysteries are things revealed by God that we otherwise could not know.

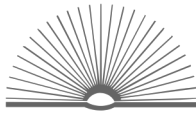
Lest anyone be tempted to question God’s fairness at these words, John Calvin illustrates man’s guilt this way:

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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¹¹"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God^a. ¹²Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved^b. ¹³Those on the rocky *soil* are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away^c. ¹⁴The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity^d. ¹⁵But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance^{e f}.

When persons of a weak sight come out into sunshine, their eyes become dimmer than before, and that defect is in no way attributed to the sun, but to their eyes. In like manner, when the word of God blinds and hardens the reprobate, as this takes place through their own depravity, it belongs truly and naturally to themselves, but is accidental, as respects the word. (*Calvin's Commentary*)

^a 8:11 **the seed is the word of God.** So God's word will be broadcast to places where it will not be accepted.

^b 8:12 **Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.** This says that the word went into their hearts—that is, the message was more than white noise to them. The problem was not that the hearers did not comprehend the word. The problem was that they did not consider it relevant. There are times when there is a deafening Satanic influence on the affections of people who hear God's word.

^c 8:13 **Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.** Do not make the parable say more than it was intended to say. Some people readily profess faith in the gospel but it does not last long.

^d 8:14 **The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** Some people make a good show of it and then demonstrate that worldly concerns mean more than God's concerns. The harvest is the goal of the planting.

^e 8:15 **But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.** The biblical doctrine of Perseverance does not teach that regenerated people are sinless, but it does teach that they do continue in the faith and produce fruit. An "honest and good heart" is not something an unbeliever has, but it is something that God grants (see Lydia in Acts 16:14).

^f 8:4-15 Not everyone was granted ears to understand the message Jesus gave. There are far fewer among the "whosever wills" than there are among the "whosever won'ts." Our task is not to figure out which is which. Our task is to plant seeds.

It is interesting to observe that the greatest enemies of our souls—the world, the flesh and the devil—are shown in this text to be what gets in the way of hearing from God. The devil steals seeds, fleshly desires keep the seeds from getting proper nourishment and worldly concerns crowd out the plants.

There is no command to "be good soil" here, only a statement of fact about human hearts. But upon closer examination you can see that this text really does come with serious warnings about listening. Here are some reasons to take God's word very seriously:

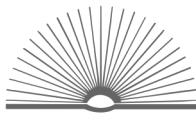
1. You have been given an opportunity to hear from God. Refuse to allow yourself to ignore His voice. Satan will do all he can to drown it out, but you can never honestly say you had no chance. Psalm 19 says that God has revealed Himself in every corner of creation. Romans 1:20 says that leaves you without excuse.
2. God's word is relevant whether or not you think it is. Fleshly desires take away your appetite for truth, but bad appetites say more about you than the message. You do not have to make the Bible relevant. Take the message seriously.

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3. The kind of “soil” that is your heart will eventually reveal itself. “Worries and riches and pleasures of the life” really do keep people from heaven. The best pleasures that earth gives compete with the Bible. Respond now.

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