

Expositions of Scripture from Bible Truth

VOLUME III
AUTHENTIC
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
—ITS REALITIES—
According to Jesus and His
Doctrines of Grace

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The Third Volume in a Series on
AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP,
showing its source to be
Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace,
through expository studies of
Jesus' discourses on Christian discipleship
as avouched by the Gospel writers.

These studies constitute **Six Chapters** that expound
the experience, the requirements, and the joy of
AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP;
and **One Addendum**, that examines Jesus'
challenge to all discipleship
through His **Word**, as detailed by His
Holy Apostle.

VOLUME III

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PREFACE TO VOLUME III

We have since first delivered from sin and its eternal consequences been confronted with the authentic disciple concept. When only thirteen a false profession was made that enabled a relatively guilt-free lifestyle of wickedness to become the ordinary and nominal “Christian life.” Not until about twenty-four did God begin to bring a terrible conviction of guilt and condemnation. When saved, immediate awareness of authentic salvation versus false profession began to pervade our consciousness. Accordingly, when first saved and having immediately become an avid study oriented follower of Christ, and then when called to special ministry and enrolled in a College/Seminary, what had been an experience began to develop into a scriptural authentication. What we mean is that our unauthentic discipleship only became authentic when salvation from sin became authentic. All through Scripture we found confirmation after confirmation that real salvation from the Real Savior produced real discipleship, which is based upon real devotion to the Real God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are full of that truth, and so much so that this series on Authentic Christian Discipleship seems nearly platitudinistic, at least in title. What other Christian discipleship is Christian discipleship other than Authentic Christian Discipleship? Certainly, other Christian discipleships exist other than authentic Christian discipleship, but what we have attempted to emphasize in these studies is that Christian discipleship is authenticated by lifestyle, commitment, and priorities. In addition, that Christ Himself left no room for salvation from sin without that lifestyle change, without that wholehearted commitment, and without that prioritizing of the spiritual over the physical. Jesus made clear in His teaching what modern Christendom fails to teach. One wonders, “How can serious students of Christ and of Scripture fail to discern and to believe and to proclaim this fundamental and emphatic reality of Christian truth?”

It would seem that unbelief of truth, of Scripture, of Christ Himself, is so prevalent that this Author is mostly branded a radical, an extremist, or at best just guilty of an over-scrutinizing of Scripture. Years ago, we visited with a pastor before preaching a series of sermons in His church. The sermons were on the Book of Romans and entitled, “A Roman Revival.” While we discussed some of the plain truth of Romans concerning the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, this pastor told me, “Oh, those things are the ideal, and not really how it really is.” We do not believe either God or Christ or the Holy Spirit or the Scriptures present to humans anything that is “not really how it is.”

This series on Authentic Christian Discipleship is only, exclusively, and restrictively “According to Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace.” That means precisely that, that our studies related to authentic discipleship to Jesus are wholly concerned with what Jesus said to disciples about discipleship—to both unauthentic and authentic—as especially concerning its demands, its requirements, and hence its authenticity. Our sincere aim and sincere prayer is that some disciples of Jesus will be able to discern what kind of discipleship Christ commissions, of what authentic discipleship consists, and “how it really is.” Amen.

CHAPTER 1
AUTHENTIC INSPIRED
DISCIPLESHIP
—A DESTINY—
OR
THE INSPIRATION OF INSPIRATION
AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF
LUKE 8:4-21
THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Take heed therefore how ye hear.
—*Jesus Christ, 35 A.D.*

PREFACE TO CHAPTER 1

Our every publication has *Luke 8:15* quoted from the Authorized Version somewhere on the cover pages. This publication is not excepted. We have long believed that *Luke 8:15* has the essential truth of authentic Christian discipleship in one pithy and concise Word from Jesus. Therefore, it became incumbent upon us to include its exposition in this series on authentic Christian discipleship and as a chapter in the completed book to be printed at some future date, the Lord willing. The exposition of this verse is under the head, The Regenerated Heart, pages 27-32. May God bless the study of this most important verse and its context from Luke's Gospel!

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AUTHENTIC INSPIRED DISCIPLESHIP

An Expository Study of *Luke 8:4-21*

In any approach to the teaching of authentic Christian discipleship, there must be a consideration of the inspiration that an inspired Scripture produces in some hearers, while it creates no such motivation at all in others. The Word of God does indeed yield fruitful goodness in some, but not in all and because of that, some would doubt the validity or infallibility of the Scripture because it does not always produce those same results in all men. In fact, in many it seems to have absolutely no affect either for good or evil. It is that truth that we will examine in the light of the Parable of the Sower, as told and explained by Jesus Christ.

The Title—The Inspiration of Inspiration

In this parable Jesus Christ teaches most emphatically that the Word of God produces animation in certain persons. It stimulates some of its hearers to lives wholly dedicated to its own unfolding. In some, the Word engenders an insatiable drive to carry that Word to others. The inspired Word inspires them; in other words, there is an inspiration of inspiration, so to speak. We might expand our title, *The Inspiration of Inspiration*, thusly: “The stimulus to creative thought and activity which is produced by the inspired Scripture.” That is what is meant by our title, and it is that truth which is the essential message of this Parable of the Sower.

Why This Parable?

It is very meaningful that this Parable of the Sower is the first parable given by Jesus Christ, as recorded by the gospel writers. While Matthew has given several “parabolic illustrations” which our Lord used before He spoke this parable, this is His first full-fledged parable. Jesus Christ draws a spiritual picture of spiritual truth through the use of a then widely seen, understood, and commonly experienced problem in crop production. Some of the precious seed was lost in what Christ names as three harmful conditions that would affect the seed’s germination. Since Christ is going to be teaching and preaching the Word, or Gospel of the

Kingdom until His departure, He first lays down these principles concerning all presentations of the Word or Gospel. These principles apply always, and are really eternal truths pertaining to God's revelation to men. How one treats, or really how one reacts to, the Word or Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the first priority regarding one's position in the Kingdom of God. This explains why this is the first parable given by Christ. It is the most important to all men. Truly, the Word of God—its place in one's life and one's reaction to it—is the ultimate and conclusive test of personal salvation, and in effect is the gauge for determining the place which the King has in one's heart and life. Christ desires every reader of this parable and of this exposition of this parable to use it to examine his or her own reaction to and relation with the Word of God. Christ raises this question, "Which of the four kinds of ground am I?" Remember, Christ did not tell us that each seed fell on two, or three, or even all four kinds of ground, but it falls on only one kind of ground. You are one of these kinds of ground, and only one.

The Parable of the Sower

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold.

Luke 8:4-8a

The "Sower" was a common sight in Palestine, especially in the plain of Gennesareth, near to Capernaum where this parable was given. Perhaps even in sight of the Sea of Galilee from the very boat from which this parable was given, Jesus could see the fields of wheat, barley, and other grains. It was customary for these crops to be sown by hand. "In the fields close to the shore may be seen the hard beaten paths into which no seed can penetrate; the

flights of innumerable birds ready to peck it up; the rocks thinly covered with thistles in neglected corners; and the rich deep loam on which the harvests grew with unwonted [uncommon] luxuriance.”¹

Christ looked out over these *much people gathered together*, (v.4) and saw in their faces four types of ground (hearts) as He taught them. Some were looking bored because they were not hearing Him at all; these were the wayside hearers, *verses 5, 12*. Some were emotionally touched and joyfully reacting to every thing that He said, whether solemn or encouraging; these were the thinly covered rock hearers, *verses 6, 13*. Still others were preoccupied in a glassy stare that seemed to look right through Him. They did not really hear because their minds were on other more important matters; these were the thorn-covered ground, not having room for the Word, *verses 7, 14*. But He saw in that multitude some whose faces shone with a radiance of reception. They were soaking up His Word into their hearts. They loved the Word and the Teacher Who taught it; these were the good ground, *verses 8, 15*. Perhaps Christ looked at the sower and then back to the multitude, and then spoke this parable because He was then seeing those four different kinds of ground (hearts) even while He spoke to them of it in this Parable of the Sower.

The Hearing Ear

And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Luke 8:8b

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.

Proverbs 20: 12

Jesus Christ repeated this phrase over and over during His ministry on earth, always in connection with some very vital truth as revealed in His teaching. The Greek of our text for, *He cried*, is εφωωνει, an imperfect tense of φωωνεο, “to call, callout, cry out” The imperfect tense denotes repeated action. The Greek word for, *when he had said*, is a present participle, which when combined with the imperfect of, “to cry out,” would be properly rendered

¹ Farrar, Cambridge Greek Testament.

like this, *While He was saying these things, He was crying out over and over, 'He that hath ears to hear, You hear!'* He cried - this out again and again during the speaking of this Parable of the Sower. In that repeated command to hear He was emphasizing the necessity for God to give to fallen man the ability to understand the Word that He spoke, that is, the Word of God. The ones who *hath ears to hear* are those who have been given hearing ears and seeing eyes by God's Holy Spirit. When Peter confessed to Jesus, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God*, Jesus told him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*² Those words from Jesus marked the source of Peter's understanding as being from God. Again, following this great confession and closely connected with it, Jesus sent out seventy evangelists to share some of the blessings of the kingdom with Israel. Upon their return, they recounted how they had found that Jesus' name brought subjection of evil spirits. Whereupon, Jesus told them,

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.
Luke 10:21-22

How is it that God reveals His divine truth to some and not to all men? The answer lies in *having ears to hear*, or as Solomon put it, having the hearing ear and the seeing eye is a gift from God. He creates both. Since the Lord has made the *hearing ear* and the *seeing eye*, He is the determining agent if one possesses them. Solomon is not referring to the physical creation of a physical organ of hearing or of seeing. He is not saying, "God made ears so we could hear the birds sing and men talk: He made our eyes so we could see things in the earth." There is no proverbial wisdom in that kind of saying.

² *Matthew 16: 17*

Indeed, that is no more than speaking the obvious, a truism if you please. Solomon is not guilty of a proverbial platitude in *Proverbs 20:12*, but had reference to the especial ability to hear spiritual truth, and to see spiritual truth, i.e. to possess wisdom.

God creates a new ear and a new eye through the regeneration of the natural man, who cannot at all *hear* or perceive spiritual things in himself. By means of a new birth, He gave to Peter and to the seventy evangelists the ability to understand what before had been a puzzle to them. It was for these reasons that Christ cried out repeatedly, *He that hath ears to hear, You hear*, in order to warn men of the dangers of not having been changed from their natural depraved state into a spiritually alive organ of hearing and seeing divine truth. This was just another way of his saying, *Ye must be born again*, but with the added warning of, “And the way to know if you have been born again is to be understanding what I am saying; therefore, Hear! Hear! Hear!”

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I Corinthians 2:14

When man is left in his *natural* state, he can never *hear* [understand] *the things of the Spirit of God*. *The things of the Spirit of God* are most certainly the Gospel.³ Man is in a depraved or *natural* state. *Natural* is the Greek ψυχικός, “soulish,” as belonging to the lower animal part, in accordance with the corrupt desires and affections. This natural status of the naturally born man involves a consciousness of God that has fallen to the level of the animal drives of the body, rendering him blind to the Spiritual God and deaf to spiritual truth.^{3a} An example of this state is found in John’s Gospel:

⁴³*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*

³ *I Corinthians. 2:2, 7* and the context of *I Corinthians 1:17,18*, and the Word of God in general, *I Corinthians 2:9,13*.

^{3a} Q.v. The Word Separates the Joints of the Soul and Spirit, pp. 240-44.

⁴⁴Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

⁴⁵And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

⁴⁶Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

⁴⁷He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

John 8:43-47

The Pharisees, to whom Jesus spoke the above words, were not of God, that is, they were not born of God; therefore they could not hear the words of Jesus Christ with understanding. Christ referenced regeneration in the words, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. He also told Nicodemus, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see [mentally perceive, understand] the kingdom of God, John 3:3*. What all this means is this: The conclusive test of the born-again experience is whether one can hear and see spiritual truth in the Word of God, because the Lord must create in a person a *hearing ear* and a *seeing eye* through regeneration before anyone can do either. This warning from Christ, repeated over and over during His ministry, and after,⁴ should alert all to judge oneself by this Parable of the Sower. Only one of the soils is born again; all the rest is the result of good seed thrown on wasted hearts.

Why Parables?

And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 8:9-10

⁴ Revelation Chapters 2 and 3.

The disciples asked Jesus a two-fold question: first, Why did Christ teach in parables? and second, Explain the meaning of them? The wording of the Greek in *Luke 8:9* contains both questions, which are included in Mark also. Christ answered the second part of the question in *Luke 8:11-15*, and answered the first part about why He spoke in parables in *Luke 8:10*; *Matthew 13:13-15*, and *Mark 4:11-13*. They all quoted *Isaiah 6:9-10* as being fulfilled in Christ's ministry. As is usual for Luke, he abbreviated his quotes of both Jesus and Isaiah, which is apparent from a comparison between them. But there is an important difference between Matthew's quote of Christ's interpretation of Isaiah and that of Luke and Mark. This difference is between the English words, *because* (*Matt. 13: 13*) and *that* (*Luke 8: 10*; *Mark 4:12*). Compare these two verses below, with the underlined word in each being the important difference between the two accounts.

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because [Greek. hoti, "because"] they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.[Added emph.]

Matthew 13: 13

And he said, Unto you it is given to know [the mysteries of the kingdom. of God] but to others in parables; that [Greek, hina, "in order that"] seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.[Added emph.]

Luke 8: 10

In Matthew the *because* introduces a causal clause, while in Luke the *that* introduces a purpose clause. Matthew quotes Jesus' reason for parables is to give enlightenment, but Luke quotes Jesus' purpose in parables is to restrict enlightenment. That is quite a difference! In fact, it appears to be an out and out contradiction. Since God's Word has no error, we are left with only one alternative: Christ must have meant both. It is widely held and proven that Christ actually spoke in Aramaic during His ministry; therefore He must have used that language to denote both truths. In view of this, when we put both Matthew's and Luke's (and Mark's) accounts together, He said in effect,

First, I speak in parables because My sons do not see and hear the truths of the kingdom too well though they must have them to understand My truth. Second, I use parables to hide My truth from those who are not My sons, and who will not understand My truth, because they refuse to see and hear My truth.

But what does this really mean? When put together, what sense can be made of their both being true? Since I gained some understanding of this apparent contradiction from the late Mr. William Hendriksen, I will presume to quote his New Testament Commentary at length in order to clarify what might seem to some to be a paradoxical difficulty.

Which report is right, Matthew's or Mark-Luke's? The answer is: "Both are correct." It was because by their own choice these impenitent Pharisees and their followers had refused to see and hear, that, as a punishment for this refusal, they are now addressed in parables, "*that* [or *in order that*] seeing, they may not see; and hearing, they may not understand." They must "endure the blame of their own blindness and hardness" (Calvin on this passage). God had given these people a wonderful opportunity; but they had refused to avail themselves of it. Result: it is God's sovereign will to remove what man is unwilling to improve, to darken the heart that refuses to hearken. He hardens those that have hardened themselves. If God even surrenders the unenlightened heathen to the lusts of their hearts when they hold back the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18, 26), will he not punish more severely the impenitents before whom the Light of the world is constantly confirming the truthfulness of his message? And if he blesses those who accept the mysterious, will he not curse those who reject the obvious? It is evident, therefore, that Matt, 13:13 is in harmony with Mark 4: 12 and Luke 8: 10; in fact, the "because" of the former helps to explain the "that" or "in order that" of the latter. When, of their own accord and after

repeated threats and promises, people reject the Lord and spurn his messages, then he hardens them, in order that those who were not willing to repent will not be able to repent and be forgiven.

Parables are meant to harden and to blind the unbelieving, while at the same time they reveal truth to the believing. All truth is like that. It either hardens and blinds, or else it softens and enlightens. God gives parables to the regenerate to manifest previously hidden truths of the kingdom, but given to the unregenerate, parables confuse and hinder any understanding of those mysteries. Receiving truth is somewhat similar to the guidance God gave to the Israelites in the wilderness journeys. When the pillar of cloud came between the Egyptians and Israel, *it was a cloud and darkness to them* [the Egyptians], *but it gave light by night to these* (Israel). Specifically, the knowledge of Christ is *to the one...a savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life,*⁵ so are the parables. Parables conceal spiritual truth from the lost and render their hearts more hardened to Christ; but to those with *hearing ears* and with *seeing eyes* the parables reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. All parables serve this dual role, as do all manifestations of divine truth, be it in the Gospel or in the Word of God.

What Word Is This “Seed”?

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Luke 8: 11

Beginning in this verse through *verse 15*, Jesus explains this parable to His own disciples. Since He desires His children to *know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*, *verse 10*, He explains the parable in detail.⁶ The first detail that Christ explained is the nature of the *seed*. *It is the Word of God*, but since the context in

⁵ *II Corinthians 2:16*

⁶ We must add that Mark quotes Jesus in *Mark 4:13* when asked about this Parable of the Sower, *Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?* Christ means that however He Himself interprets and explains His own parables is the way that we must interpret and explain them. That is the reason why He explained this first of His parables, the Parable of the Sower, in order to give to us a pattern to follow to understand all His parables. And since

the preceding *verse 10* is specified as *the mysteries of the kingdom*, that helps qualify the *Word of God* meant by Jesus. Surely all the Word—from *Genesis* to *Revelation*—is included in the principles taught in the Parable of the Sower. This parable applies to the inspired revelation generally; however the *mysteries of the kingdom* is the particular Word here referred to by Christ.

The word, *mystery*, is very interesting. Its use today means something hidden and not revealed, but the Greek word, *mysteria*, as used in the New Testament, concerns a divinely revealed truth that was previously hidden, but is now manifest to certain men. It is truth that would have remained hidden if God had not chosen to reveal it especially. In observing the twenty-one times that Paul used this word, it becomes evident that the Gospel of Jesus Christ that offers salvation to all believing sinners—Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, male or female, etc.—is the main emphasis in the term.⁷ In fact, the terms, *word*, *gospel*, and *mystery* are used somewhat interchangeably in the New Testament. While each word has its own emphasis, still the main thought in each is the same: that of a revelation of truth previously unknown to its receptors. It is an unveiling brought about by the especial sovereign act of God. These revelations of truth come through God's servants who read, preach, teach, sing, or otherwise present the truth of the Gospel and the Word. Notice the interchange between these terms in the following, with the underlined words denoting that interchange:

[cont.] Christ interpreted His parables in a detailed and precise way, we should too. Christ meant in every principal in the parables a representation and an instruction of truth. His interpretations did not at all limit the parables to be teaching only one great general truth. But He drew detailed pictures where each figure within the parable represented some important aspect of the truth being revealed. We should approach the interpretation of all the parables of Christ in the same way as He. Any other way is a departure from Christ's own Word concerning His interpretation of this parable, *Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*

⁷ See *I Timothy 3:9; Ephesians 3:3-6; 6:19; Colossians 1:26,27; 4:3*. A pursuance of these references will reveal this *mystery* as being principally the Gospel of the grace of God whereby men are brought to Jesus Christ.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know at manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia,

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

I Thessalonians 1:4-8

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.⁸

I Peter 1: 23- 25^o

Consequently, the reference to the *seed*, or *word*, in this parable can be applied with equal scriptural authority to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to that revelation of divine truth that is the *mystery of the kingdom*, and is the Word of God as the Gospel of Christ, that this first of our Lord's parables also refers. The truth of the Gospel is the heart and soul of God's Word, and it is man's reaction to that Gospel, as well as to all divine truth in the Word of God, to which Jesus alluded when He spoke this Parable of the Sower, and said, *The seed is the word of God.*

⁸ Two Greek synonyms, logos (" 'the word' not in its outward form, but with reference to the thought connected with the form") and rema ("that which is said, utterance, word"), are used interchangeably in *I Peter 1:23-25*. As with logos, rema often refers to and means, *the word of the gospel*, as also in *Romans 10:8*.

⁹ Also compare *I Thessalonians 2:13* with its context of verses 2, 4, 8, 9. See this interchange in *Romans 10:15-17*; *Ephesians 1:13*; and *Colossians 1:5*. In *Hebrews 4:2*, the *gospel* is referred to as the *word* preached.

The Seed Is Sown

In each of the four explanations by Christ, He used a prepositional phrase to show the place where the *seed* (Word) was sown.¹⁰ Notice the phrases from each: (1) *verse 12, Those by the way*; (2) *verse 13, They on the rock*; (3) *verse 14, And that which fell among thorns*; (4) *verse 15, But that on [better, “in”] the good ground*. Each preposition corresponds with the kind of ground there suggested. The Greek preposition is different in every case; and they are respectively: para, “beside,” epi, “upon,” eis, “unto” en, “within.” The *seed by the way* is literally “beside the heart” (para). The *seed on the rock* is literally only “upon the heart” (epi). The *seed among thorns* is really just “unto,” “for” or “in regard to the heart” (eis). Only *the seed sown on the good ground* is placed “within the heart” (en). Thus in every case the variety of soils and the conditions of their sowing are accurately portrayed. In none of the soils is penetration of the ground realized with the exception of the last, the *good ground*. The seed is either beside (para), on top of (epi), or in regard to (eis), and never yields a fruitful harvest unless it enters within (en) the heart. Unless the Word of God penetrates the human heart, there is no salvation. Therefore, the first three types of soil represent lost persons who have heard the Word of the Gospel, but have not had a real change of heart that would allow the Word to enter therein. Only *the good ground* illustrates the Christian. The other three remain lost and foreigners to the *engrafted word* (*James 1:21*). This is vitally important if one is to make a correct self-judgment regarding the truth of the parable. When one determines which ground is best descriptive of oneself, then the true spiritual condition is manifest. That is an aim of Christ.

¹⁰ Of the three unproductive soils, only the seed sown *among thorns* has a preposition that denotes movement or entry, eis. Very literally it denotes movement “unto” and in many cases “into.” A very usual meaning, however, is “for,” or “in regard to” (e.g. *Acts 3:38, Repent and be baptized...for [eis, “in regard to”] the remission of sins...*). The reason for its use by the Holy Spirit with regard to the thorn infested ground would be this seed’s landing place. An excellent translation is *among thorns*, suggesting an entrance “into” that kind of worldly heart-environment, where the seed is submerged “into” a condition, a situation, or a position, and thus *choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, v. 14b*, and yet no entry “into” the heart.

The Hard Heart

Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. *Luke 8: 12*

Christ gives a detailed interpretation of His parable to His disciples. In this explanation He emphasizes the soil upon which the seed falls. It is the same seed but different ground. What determines the growth of the seed is not the fault of the seed, but germination depends entirely upon the condition of the soil. This ground or soil represents the heart of man. In the first of the four soils, *verse 12*, and in the last of the soils, *verse 15*, the word *heart* actually appears as Christ's explanation of what the ground is. In the other two explanations of the rocky and the thorny soils, we are left to supply that application of the heart to them.

What is meant by the ground being representative of the heart of man? The term, *heart*, is representative of the chief organ of physical life. *Heart*, to the Hebrew and in Christ's use, became very akin to the mind of man or man's Id, Ego, the very center or seat of all life. The Holy Spirit has always, therefore, used the heart as the symbol of the seat of man's emotional and spiritual being. It stands as the entirety of man's mental and moral activity. It is the figurative force behind the Id or Ego that rationalizes and emotionalizes all activities for man. The heart is the seat of emotional and rational life, and controls the life of man. His heart determines his activities, his thoughts, his likes and dislikes. It is the real person, being the deepest control center of man, which determines all courses of life's activities and responses. Therefore, the *heart* is the essential area of man's being which the *seed* attempts to penetrate, but the condition of the ground (heart) makes the germination impossible unless the soil (heart) is first prepared to receive it. One thing stands out in this explanation by Christ; namely, no heart of man will receive the Word of God except God first prepare, cultivate, and change that heart.

The problem with this *way side* heart is its hardness that enables the devil to carry away the Word that is cast beside it. The Bible teaches throughout that the devil has such powers. The access he has to the human mind is a major problem man has with him. While it is easy to blame the devil for our every wrong, this thievery of the Word is the fault of the hearer. This becomes obvious as we take note that in giving the parable, Christ said that this *seed* sown by the *way side* was first *trodden down* before the fowls devoured it, *verse 5*. That is a significant statement that clearly fixes blame. The birds could not receive all the blame for taking up to themselves seed that the ground first rejected. But furthermore, the seed was maltreated—*trodden down*—before the birds swallowed it down. This *trodden down* idea represents the disregard for God’s Word which the world has generally. They neither care for nor consider as important this *seed* that is beneath their feet. With such an environment, it should not be surprising that the ground is hardened. The *way side* is a road which was necessary in order to traverse the field, to carry the seed as well as to handle the fertilizer and reap the crops, etc. But a total disregard for the seed by its being *trodden down* suggests the defiant attitude in the world, which environment does indeed harden hearts to God’s message. As the *way side* or road was a necessary part of the sower’s broadcast, so the world and its irreverent attitude toward the things of God are necessary evils for the cultivation of the good ground with its harvest. But the responsibility for the hardness of heart lies within the hearts of those hardened by their continual *trodden down* attitude toward the good seed of God’s Word.

The devil...taketh away the word out of their hearts. The words, *out of*, in the KJV are unfortunate. It reads in the Greek, *and taketh the word away from [apo] their hearts*. The main idea being separation. These hearers are separated from the Word by the efforts of the devil, but only after these hearers had refused the Word. The devil is only one person; therefore the term “devil” oftentimes portends all his evil host of ranking demons,

who are really extensions of his evil authority and work. They successfully separate the hardened hearer from the message of the Word because it was not in the heart, but was only beside the heart. The hardness of heart is the culprit that delays, delays, delays, reception of the Word into the heart. A church service is attended, a person hears the Word and is challenged to faith and obedience. The condition of his heart is hardness brought about through the passage of evil thoughts, through the activities of worldly enterprises, and through the continual walking upon godly truth. The perversity and indifference delays, delays, delays, until the devil inspires an evil word of criticism towards the church, the sermon, the preacher, or one of a hundred other things, and away goes the seed. The devil has swallowed up the seed, and the heart remains unchanged because in his heart he chose not to *believe and be saved*. This hardened heart has failed to understand the Word of Truth, which if understood, would have evidenced faith and salvation. It goes unchanged, ready again to delay, delay, delay. But the next time the Word is sown upon this heart, there will be a harder way side, a heavier trample, an easier delay, and even quicker fare provided for the fowls.

The Shallow Heart

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. Luke 8: 13

Emotions are a vital part of life. Even concerning the weightier and eternal factors of spiritual life, they are a genuine part of human experience. But when emotions rule one's responses and actions, then they are entirely out of place. These hearers who receive the Word *on the rock* are emotionally motivated. They receive the Word *with joy*. Joy is the predominating accompaniment to their reception of the Word. Matthew and Mark both tell us that the *rock* upon which the seed falls are they who *when they have heard the word immediately receive it with gladness*, Mark 4:16 (See also Matthew 13:20). Their immediate reaction to the message of the Gospel Word is

only joy. This means that there is no conviction and felt guilt of sin. There is no dealing with the broken hearted unworthiness which is the vital part of true salvation. No one can come to Christ in an entirely positive mind-set. There must be a bizarre experience with sin, which is the distinguishing mark of a real encounter with the Savior. Christ is the Savior from sin, having to do with sin, as a substitute for sin, cleansing from sin, as the One who deals with sin. Sin is what He came into the world to deal with and sin is what He, through His Gospel and Word, comes to the heart of man to remove—both its guilt, penalty and its power. Apart from the remorse, grief, and self-reproach of true conviction of one's own culpability before an angry God, there can be no real root into the soul by the penetrating sword of the Word in the Gospel.

Only when one has a deeply felt need for a savior from sin, will the whole heart of man open up to receive Christ and the Word within the very center or seat of one's life. These joyful recipients *have no root*, and because there is no depth of belief that centers upon Christ being the Savior of guilty sinners, they *in time of temptation fall away*. If they had been through the experience of salvation from felt guilt of sin, then that experience would sustain them through any and all trials. There is no possible distressful experience that can in any way compare with one's experience with the Savior of sinners. When really dealt with about sin, there is nothing to compare with the disturbing feelings of guilt, shame, and despair, which the Holy Spirit brings to the heart of the prepared sinner. When that is followed by the peace of God, nothing can ever take that experience away from either the memory or the heart. That person has become a true hearer of the Word. But these false professors have only joy; there is no sorrow which worketh repentance. Therefore, Christ accounts them as still lost. Joy is not the predominate emotion of saved sinners at their time of salvation, but it is one of shame, guilt, sorrow, and despair, followed by peace, and then joy. The root of a real experience with the Savior of sinners sinks down deep into the very center of a person, never to be removed and

certainly never to be forgotten. No temptation of this life can remove them *from so great a salvation* experienced in the heart.

When one has this sin-relieving experience with Jesus Christ, then, with that biggest of all problems solved, there can be no problem or *temptation* which can remove them from Christ's stability so as to fall from Him. Any other problem, as compared to sin and its heart-wrenching encounter, is anticlimactic. All other trials are secondary in nature, with no resemblance to the awfulness of sin's terrifying horrors. All other difficulties, when compared to the sinner's confrontation with God's Spirit and Word about personal sin, are in ludicrous contrast to the conflict of sin and the following peace which characterizes true salvation. This is why those who know nothing of this inner battle *for a while believe*.

This *root* which sustains the true believer is that deeply implanted Word of substitution ¹¹ found only in the Gospel of Christ and in the Spirit of God. It is of note that in Christ's original words of this parable (v.6), He said that this kind of receptor of the Gospel/Word *withered away, because it lacked moisture*. This has reference to the shallowness of the root being on top of the rock and having no water to prolong its life; it dries up and dies. How like false professors who smile and joy all the while during their supposed salvation experience. Later on in life, they receive no *moisture* to sustain them because they cannot receive the Spirit of God. The moisture is representative of the Spirit Who supports and feeds the true believer through genuinely deep and profound changes of soul and spirit. The Spirit provides nourishing provision for the soul of the deep-rooted believer. The root which reached deep within the recesses of the guilty soul of the believing sinner will be the same vehicle to maintain the vital life of

¹¹ The "Word of substitution" is the truth of the Gospel that Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again substitutionarily for the believing sinner. The Holy Spirit really, practically, and spiritually implants that Word of substitution in the mind and soul and spirit—within the heart—of the believer. The "Word of substitution" is thereafter the greatest reality of the *engrafted word* of James 1:21.

God throughout every trial, temptation, and threat of scorching heat from life's difficulties. No problem will ever remove the deeply seated experience and apparatus of salvation from sin. The awesomeness of that turning point will provide the instrumentality to draw from the same Savior and God whatever is needed to face every temptation that will come later in life.¹²

The Divided Heart

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

Luke 8: 14

This seed is *among* thorns, that is, it is “for,” or “in regard to,” a heart that is filled with thorns. According to Jesus, these thorns are *the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life*. This word, *life*, denotes not the high kind of life as expressed in the Greek *zoe*—God’s life, spiritual life, the eternal life—but is *bios*, “the external aspect of existence.” The word is rendered *this world’s good* in *I John 3:17*, and means the “goods” or “provisions” of animal life, or physical life, that is, food, shelter, clothing, “the necessities of life,” thus termed. But it goes further than just those necessities. It includes riches and pleasures in addition to what one needs to survive. Even these *cares* are evil when indulged in to an extreme. These hearers are divided in their hearts between choosing the high values of the Kingdom or the low worth of the things of this life. Their hearts are filled with three basic elements of this life that will snuff out the powerful message of the Gospel just as surely as did the birds of evil or the heat of trials, but with one exception. The choking tendency of the *cares, riches, and pleasures of this life* will take a little longer to effect a rejection of the Word sown.

Cares. Matthew amplifies these *cares* with the added *cares of the world*, or literally, “the anxieties of the age.” In *Luke 12:22-31* Christ warned that these were not to be the worry of His disciples.

¹² Acts 14:22; I Corinthians 10:13

Before that warning He gave the parable of The Rich Fool whose failing was the *care* or anxiety of worldly things. That fool worried so about things of this age that he spent all his time *tearing down barns* that held his possessions, in order to build bigger barns to hold more of them, an outrageously futile pursuit. That rich man was a fool because of the fleeting nature of his great concern. He worried about the temporary, passing, and impermanent “goods” and neglected the permanency of his own soul.

Riches. Matthew also amplifies these *riches* with the added *deceitfulness of riches*. The Word of God comes into the hearing of a man, but *riches* lie to or deceive him respecting that Word. Actually, riches tell gullible sinners that wealth and the worldly respect of ambitious careers and successes are the true worth, that money is the important matter of this life, and that with wealth comes happiness. All that is the *deceitfulness of riches*. It is a quest for wealth that chokes out the wonderful Word about Jesus. It is quite ironic that He Who owns it all is rejected by those who desire to own it all. Strange it is that the real wealth of God is stifled while an illusory propensity for prosperity multiplies. That is the *deceitfulness of riches*, in which riches strangle the Word. Because the riches of the world and Christ spring up together, love for one consumes any concern for the other.

This experience is true of many who have made professions of faith. They claim Jesus as Savior, and like the seed sown among thorns that *sprang up with it*, these claim to have received the Word while they remain immersed in worldliness. They know the correct words that accompany salvation. They pray attractive prayers and give money to the church. But every time a choice confronts them (obedience to the Word versus obedience to the call of riches) the Word is choked out and away they go to make another expedition into the Babylon of deceitful riches.

Many who profess a religious Christianity encounter this overpowering desire for riches and never recognize that they in no way produce any spiritual fruit to perfection. Since they feel themselves delivered from sin’s inevitable outcomes and yet can

continue to seek and find more worldly wealth, they mistakenly evangelize others promising them also freedom from hell and uninterrupted worldly riches. “Money is good. Wealth is God’s way of blessing His children; therefore we must seek wealth and worldly prosperity in order to be blessed by our Father in heaven.” With this false testimony of words and life they win others into their prosperity Christianity and only increase worldly converts who are *two-fold greater children of hell than themselves*. Their spiritual condition will eventually become apparent because, little by little, their supposed profession of deliverance from hell did not include deliverance from the worldly riches of this life. Their professions will fade away as their own worldly riches increase. The thorns will win out in the end.

Pleasures. Then there are the *pleasures*, the sensuous lusts of the adamic nature, which make the solemn Word of the Gospel seem to be an unimportant and trivial matter. The captivating power of the momentary pleasures of drugs, sexual vice, drunkenness, gambling, and all the rest, snuffs out the Word of Truth in these kinds of hearers.

In *verse 7* Christ said that these *thorns—the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life*—sprang up with the Word when heard. This means that thorns never were separated from the hearers. Through a sort of dual pseudo-germination, the devil schemes to time worldly pursuits, problems, and pleasures to coincide with the hearing of the Word. These thorns, coming to fruition in them at the same time as the mystery of the Kingdom confronts them, *choke* its great truth so that this heart brings forth *no fruit to perfection*. The thorns and Word contend for the same ultimate fruition in this life, but the thorns win out because of the nature of the ground (heart). The natural habitat of the unchanged heart favors the thorns of this life; therefore they push out ahead and smother any struggling shoots of the good seed of true life. The *cares, riches, and pleasures of this life* find a healthy environment in these hearers who give precedence to these thorny growths. The good seed is excluded from this ground and will not bring forth any godly flora.

Luke wrote that these *go forth...and bring no fruit to perfection*. A. T. Robertson rendered this Greek present participle that is translated, *go forth*, with the words, “as they go their way,” meaning that in their lives the Word co-exists with the thorns. These hearers go right on in their own way as when first they heard the Word. They do not thrive on the Word of God as it rules over the lives of true believers. But they flourish on the dangers and challenges of the anxieties of worldly enterprises, on the invitations of the devil’s call to riches, on the possession of more and more, and on the fleeting gratification of the bodily delights of the five senses. Their fruit is the gusto of this life, and all the pursuits of competitively gained honor, fame, position, and wealth in this world. They take delight in showing their prowess in man’s scheme of things. With varying degrees of skill and technique, these thorny hearers endeavor to gain recognition among the other worldly-minded thorn-lovers. A “well done” from the league of sophisticates will suffice their longing for identification among their thorny peers. All this together with the presence of the Word of God will render them in the end as *without excuse*. Truly, a fruitful and godly life was choked out of its proposed prominence by a love for the thorns of this world, and they are still lost.

The Regenerated Heart

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Luke 8:15

The *But* that begins this verse marks it as a great contrast to the first three soils. Up until now each group of people has differed from the one preceding it. The first *way side* hearers never respond to the Word of God in any way; they remain hardened and grow even more hardened with each hearing-experience. The second group of hearers responds immediately and enthusiastically with great joy, but after a short time, because of difficulties, which all godly professors experience (*II Tim 3:12*), they wither away and are dead after all. The third class of

hearers have also a pseudo experience with salvation, but having never separated from the thorny world they are eventually *choked* out of true life. Notice the progressive order of this time element in these three types of hearts. The first group never receives anything. The second group after a short time becomes visibly dead again. The third group takes longer; they are “progressively choked,”¹³ suggesting a delayed or prolonged strangling of the Word. This *But* in *verse 15* comes in contrast to the first seed, no apparent life, to the second seed, a short appearance of life, and to the third seed, a somewhat prolonged appearance of life. Now comes the true life, the eternal life, the persevering life of the true reception of the Word of the Gospel. Now comes the *seed* into the regenerated and heavenly prepared heart that endures to the end. It will bring forth its fruit *an hundredfold*.

This fourth ground is the divinely prepared heart that always receives the Word. Jesus calls this ground *good ground* in both the original parable and in His explanation of it. He interpreted His parabolic meaning of the *good ground* in *verse 8* as a *good and honest heart* in *verse 15*. The two different words that He used to describe this ground (heart) were kale and agate, rendered *honest* and *good* respectively in *verse 15*.

Honest. The *honest heart* is the same Greek word used of the *good ground* in *verses 8* and *15*. When referring to the ground, it means “beautiful,” probably with reference to the fertile or rich profitability of ground well prepared for the sowing of the seed. That has to do with the parabolic picture, but has nearly the same meaning in Christ’s explanation. The same word is used to describe the hearts of the recipients of the *seed* who *bring forth fruit with patience*, that is, the saved. The word for *honest*, kale, means “good, beautiful, of good quality or disposition.” Certainly that is not a definition of the natural human heart. But according to Jesus that kind of heart is the only kind that will receive the Word of the Gospel.

¹³ Literal rendering of the Greek, sumpnigontai, pres. pass., KJV *v. 14*, *are choked*.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:9

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

Matthew 15:19

...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Genesis 8:21

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

Jeremiah 13:23

... there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Romans 3: 12

Good. The Greek word translated *good* in Jesus' explanation of the heart which receives the Word in *verse 15*, is agathe, meaning "good, profitable, generous, beneficent, upright, virtuous," all the things which the natural human heart is not. Paul said, using the same Greek word, *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18a)*. In other words, the only *good* thing that Paul possessed was through what God put in his spirit life, his regenerated spirit life, namely his regenerated heart. Christ never used this word *good* carelessly, but guarded its use thoughtfully. In fact, He refused to use this word, *good*, except as an adjective describing God.

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him. Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

Luke 18:18-19

Jesus does not here deny His equality with God or that His Person is Himself God, but He rebuked this rich ruler for using the word, *good*, in a careless manner. Christ was saying in asking the ruler, *Why callest thou me good?*, if he really understood the meaning of the term. Since he referred to Jesus as *Good Master*, was he recognizing Jesus as God? Did he really understand what he was attributing to Jesus when he addressed Him as *good*? Only God is *good*. Therefore, when these hearts are described as

honest and good, they are by Christ said to be godly hearts. In other words, *good* hearts possess divine quality. These hearts are *partakers of the Divine nature* (I Peter 1:4). They possess the divine seed, *for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God* (I John. 3: 9). These hearts are *honest and good* hearts because the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost* have made them such (Titus 3:5). In short, these *honest and good* hearts have been born again in order for them to be prepared to receive the Word of the Gospel. Any other natural heart (the three other kinds of human hearts as pictured in the three other types of soils) will not receive the *things of the Spirit of God* (I Corinthians 2:14). Certainly, the Word of God, the Mystery of the Kingdom, the Gospel Truth, and the salvation experience are *things of the Spirit of God*.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [understood].

But he that is spiritual judgeth [i.e. understands, same Greek word as for *discerned*, v. 14] *all things, yet he himself is judged* [understood] *of no man*.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

I Corinthians 2: 14-16

It is only after one has been given this *mind of Christ* that any person can understand the Word or Gospel or Truth or Mystery of Christ. Every man must first be divinely prepared by a new birth before he can ever receive Christ. As *the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit* (John. 3:8); therefore the new birth is like the wind; it is uncontrollable by man. We see only the results of God's work of regeneration performed in the heart; it is only that heart that will certainly respond and believe. The proper reaction to the Gospel or Word is this hearing, which is the evidence of the new birth. This is also plainly spoken by John:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. [Added emph.]

John 1: 12-13

These who receive Christ were born, not of blood, [literally, “bloods;” meaning ancestral pedigree] *nor of the will of the flesh* [not by sexual procreation], *nor of the will of man* [not by man’s choice or volition], *but of God* [solely by His Sovereign choice]. The word, *were*, is past tense and completed action (in English and Greek); therefore a past experience of regeneration precedes any reception of either Christ as Savior or the Word of the Gospel. It is God’s first choice of the sinner that determines salvation, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* (*John 15: 16*). This is precisely the teaching of Jesus in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower. The *good ground* is the *honest and good heart* because it has been regenerated by the power and choice of God, and thereby is divinely prepared to receive the divine seed when it is sown (heard).

Because these have been born again, they *having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*. The divine life enables them to respond to the Word when presented to them. The word, *keep*, expresses the measure of this response. The Greek is katechousin, “to hold fast,” or in a mental sense, “to retain.” The immediate connection to the parable is obvious. First, since it means “to hold down,” or “to hold fast,” this word presents this seed in contrast to the way side seed which was easily removed by the birds, and to the rock-sown seed which had no root that would bind it to the good earth, and to the thorn-sown seed that was eventually uprooted with the continued growth of the thorns. But this *good ground* “holds fast” to the good seed and produces deep roots to produce a rich crop.

Also, this word translated *keep* was a nautical term, “to make for, to steer towards” a certain destination. Closely akin to this usage is the passive meaning: “to be possessed or inspired, enraptured.” This idea pertains to a fixed sight, which, as it is

kept in view, brings a certain inspiration to continue on until the final goal or sought after thing is realized. This is the inspiration of inspiration to which the title of this exposition refers. God's Word enraptures those who are born again. It has an animating effect upon them. It influences, stimulates, and impels them to many creative and effective efforts. God's Word brings into the *honest and good heart* spiritually pure life and spiritual animation to accomplish excellence for God's honor and glory. This animating work of the Word *brings forth fruit with patience*; it keeps the believer steering toward the *prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14)*. The written Word keeps before the *good and honest heart* the vision of Christ and the *prize* of true Christ-likeness. Christ's image inspires and motivates the Christian, and that Spirit-filled goodness is the real *fruit with patience*.

The Christian has diminished concerns with the trials of physical life when compared to deliverance from the trials of sin. He cares little for *the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life*, since at His delightful Lord's hand are *pleasures forevermore*. How can the regenerate soul, who has experienced the powers of the life to come, glory in anything other than the Cross of Christ? The Word of God inspires the Christian because its inspired message is Christ. Over and over it is the Christ Who is communicated to his inner soul. The Word is like a syndicate media service beaming the Wonderful One to the inner man. It flashes glories of His Person and His splendid works constantly to the new mind. One such bulletin carries enough motivating power to last until the next signal from the divine Spirit-breathed Word. God rouses the spirit of the believer to correct and diligent and patient fruit. Thus God produces Christ-likeness from the fruit of the Spirit in His blessed children through the propelling influences of His divinely inspired and infallibly accurate dispatches of the Altogether Lovely Lord Jesus Christ. That is only possible through a communication from the Word of God, and that is the Christian's inspiration from the inspiration in the Word. Authentic disciples receive personal inspiration from the inspired Word, thus experiencing the inspiration of inspiration.

Manifested Hearts

No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

Luke 8:16-17

A heart that is inspired by Christ cannot be hidden. Christ confirms as much in this parabolic illustration. He has given four—the only four—reactions to the sown or preached Word of God. Now He says one of those four reactions will become manifest in every person who hears the Word. By using a candle to illustrate this truth, He chose something that everyone used in that day. These candles (lamps) when lighted were never extinguished except for necessary maintenance. It remained lighted both night and day. Whatever the reason for its continuous burning, it made a good illustration of the fruitful *good ground*. The lamp, though perhaps needed most at night, would nevertheless remain lighted at all times. The application to the good seed is that the fruit wrought through the inspiration of inspiration will always manifest itself. That is the meaning of the *fruit with patience* phrase also. Christ means to illustrate the continuity of this inspiration of inspiration, and also to illustrate the manifest nature of the seed's resultant state after being sown, whether for bird food, for rock covering, for thorn cushions, or for fruit production. It will manifest itself as either in *good ground*, or as on one of the non-productive conditions given in the parable. Christ assures that if we only will look, we can see the type of heart we have simply by taking note of the affect the Word of God has upon us. Just as no one lights a lamp to put it under the bed, but for placement in its specially prominent resting place, so God does not regenerate a heart, inspire it to fruitfulness a hundredfold, and then allow that yield to remain hidden. God manifests the light, life, and love of the Word-inspired and Spirit-filled heart by placing its testimony plainly visible before all.

Christ begins *verse 17* with a *For*, enforcing God's absolute revelation of the Light brought about by His Word's illuminating effect upon men's hearts. He says that nothing that is "misleading" (*secret*, KJV) will remain so, neither is there anything that is "hard to understand" (*hid*, KJV) that shall not be "experientially known and shining" (*known and come abroad*, KJV).¹⁴ For those who *keep* the Word (*v. 15*), Christ is guarantying a *manifest* heart as illumed through the effect that the Word of God has upon it. While the hardened, rock-covered, and thorn-infested soils *manifest* only unchanged hearts, the *good ground*, well prepared for reception of the Word, *manifests* a *heart* at peace with God, a *heart* removed from the corruptions of this life, a *heart* full of the righteousness of the God Who created it. This metamorphosed *heart* is filled with the love and life and light of the Light of men, Jesus Christ. God must "open to sight, manifest, and radiate" the glory of His Son in His sons.

A Beneficial Warning:

Christ Applies the Parable of the Sower

Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. [Added emph.]

Luke 8: 18

Christ now calls all men everywhere—good soils and bad—to careful self-examination to determine one's own reaction to the Word. The *Take heed* is the same Greek word as *see* in *verse 16*. As all men would place a lamp in a place so all could *see* the light, Christ now says in *verse 18* for all men to look to themselves for the light in oneself. Jesus applies His parable by saying in effect,

As a lamp is for seeing, so the Word is a light and is for hearing; and I warn all who hear the Word to look carefully into one's own life. As the Word shines on each heart, see if its light is in one's heart.

¹⁴ The KJV *manifest* and *come abroad* in *verse 17* are both translations of the same Greek word, *phaneron*, "open to sight, visible, shining."

Take heed therefore means that since it will be manifest and since it is of the utmost importance how one reacts to the Word, *See therefore how ye hear*. The word, *how*, is the key to understanding Christ's application of His Parable of the Sower. The word is pos, which means "to what effect," or "with what meaning." Christ says, *Since the Word will reveal hearts, look at what effect and with what meaning that you hear the Word*. Christ desires each of us to make a careful examination of our hearts by taking note of the condition they *manifest* when confronted with God's truth. With what meaning do we hear the Word? Is the effect or is the significance of hearing the Word like the way side hearer? or like the rocky hearer? or like the thorny hearer? or is it like the fruitful hearer? Does the Word of God really interest me? Do I find it intriguing? and does it inspire me? If we would examine ourselves we could determine which soil best describes our own relationship with Jesus Christ. To what effect and with what meaning do I hear the Word when I read it and God's servants sow it? This warning is a principal reason Christ spoke the Parable of the Sower, and this is its value to us today.

The threat against the refusal to *Take heed* to this parable is awesome indeed. There are two types of persons included in this warning in *verse 18*: the ones who *hath*, and the ones who *hath not*. The first group are the *good ground* hearers who *hath* the Word in their hearts; therefore they have the fruit of the Spirit, and the inspiration of the Word, and an *hundredfold* fruitfulness. Jesus here says even more of the Word and Spirit and fruitfulness will be given to them. To them even more inspired endeavors will be known. To them even more beauties of the Indwelling Christ will be realized. They will continue to grow and grow and grow, because the Master Vinedresser cultivates them, and He shall see that they bring forth *much fruit*. Because the seed has taken deep root, more *shall be given*. That growth will continue because *He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6)*.

However, to the second group who *hath not* the Word in the heart, but the Word is “beside it,” “upon it,” or “unto it,” to them shall the Word be *taken* away. That supposed salvation will be removed irretrievably. He shall have *taken even that which he seemeth to have*, but really did not have at all. The Greek word translated *seemeth* means “thinketh, supposeth, pretendeth, imagineth” that he has. Christ tells us that this parable is so plain that every listener who will *see* or *take heed* to the effect of the Word on themselves can indeed know their true position before God. Christendom is full of pretenders who having physically heard the Gospel, rule their own lives without the Word. They are not really touched by God’s Word; they neglect its study; they could live entirely without it. These persons lose all that they thought they had when they professed faith in Jesus Christ. What is it that these *seemeth to have*? Why, they *seemed* to have possession of their souls. They had it altogether, as they say. They were in such control. But they shall lose their most prized possession that their supposed position seemed to assure them, their own souls. May I ask you? “To what effect and with what meaning have you heard the Word of God in this exposition? Examine yourself in the light of this Word in this first and most important of all Christ’s parables, The Parable of the Sower. It has a lesson to teach you. Which one of the four soils are you?”

Fellowship in Love: An Illustration

Then Came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Luke 8:19-21

Matthew and Mark place this incident before The Parable of the Sower, but as is usual with Luke’s stated purpose in his Gospel (1:3), he places it after it for effect, not for chronology.

According to Luke's purpose, this incident illustrated the affinity which true good ground hearers of the written Word have with the Living Word, and the genuine feelings of love Jesus has toward them alone.

His mother and brothers came seeking to capitalize upon their earthly relationship, expecting Him to respond to them. We are not told for what reason they sought to see Jesus, but it matters little because their coming sought to take advantage of something that their close earthly ties might accomplish. They supposed that Jesus would respond to their need more readily than to the crowds whom He taught. When told of their desire, He said, *My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.* His earthly family thought that His love for them would be something special, granting them special privilege. But Christ makes an important distinction between physical love and spiritual love. Obviously, this earthly love is "hate" when compared to, or when restricting or limiting, the spiritual love (*Luke 14:26*). This spiritual love is based upon a spiritual affinity with Jesus and with His Father.

A Spiritual Family

In The Parable of the Sower the *good and honest* hearts who received the Word are regenerated. They alone possess the life of God. They are born again.¹⁵ Jesus alludes to that affinity when calling the hearers and doers of His Word, *My mother and my brethren.* By placing this incident after the parable, Luke means to illustrate Christ's interpretation of the *good ground* hearers as actually possessors of the very Life of God. They are the ones who are spiritually akin to Jesus. Therefore, He gives priority to their spiritual needs over those of mere physical kinship.

When Jesus began His public ministry, His ties with His earthly family were secondary in importance and priority.¹⁶ Not until He hung on the cross and had reached His divine destiny did He again

¹⁵ See The Regenerated Heart, pp. 27-32. ¹⁶ See *John 2:4*.

make these earthly relationships of any consideration.¹⁷ Thus, spiritual affinity with Him and with His Father takes priority both then and now. Christ affirms the spiritual life present in those who *hear the Word of God, and do it*. The Parable of the Sower teaches that truth, and this incident in the life of Christ affirms it. The *partakers of the divine nature* are the ones with whom Christ seeks to fellowship, for they only have true kinship with Him and with His Father. All other relationships are relatively unimportant when collated, or critically compared and associated, with the attraction of a spiritual ear and a spiritual eye, which perceive the truth that He taught, which, when understood, motivates those hearers to *do it*.

Spiritual Love

Christ does indeed establish a unique relationship with those *who hear the word of God and do it*. They have the Spirit-life that is a powerful draw to move Him toward them exclusively. He manifests Himself to them in a special way. It is with these that He, as in this incident, keeps Himself in contact. He clings to the hearer and doer of the Word, and refuses to be drawn away by other relationships. Christ loves the Father, and the unity of the Godhead holds especial love and bonding devotion between The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That same devotion, affection, and attraction between the members of the Godhead, Christ feels toward those who have an affinity for Him and His teaching. Only they who *hear the Word can keep the Word*, and only they *do it*. That powerful attraction toward the Truth in the *hearts* of the *good ground* draws entire devotedness and sympathy toward them from the Lord Jesus Christ. They have the true Life of God, and have a unique compatibility with Him that exists also in the Godhead. Whatever is the relationship of love between the Father and the Son, is also what is between the Son and His *hearers*.

This relationship is really fellowship, or an active commonality, between God and man. In Christ the same three basic characteristics or features of God—Life, Light, and Love—which exist always

¹⁷ See *John 19:25-27*.

within the Trinity, exist also between Christ and His *good ground* hearers. God is Life; God is Light; God is Love; and the fellowship which exists always in the Godhead is focused upon these three distinctives of God. The fellowship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit consists of the Life, Light, and Love of each within themselves as distinct Persons and toward themselves.

The same fellowship exists between Christ and His hearers. The Parable of the Sower and Luke's record of what immediately follows reveals these three principal features in the *good ground* hearers of the parable. In the parable only the *good ground* hearers have the Life of God (v. 15). Only they have roots in the Word of God and draw *moisture* from the Spirit of God to *bare fruit an hundredfold* (v.8). Again, only the *good ground* hearers have the Light of God (vs. 16-17), which manifests the Life possessed within. And finally, only the *good ground hearers* who *hear the word of God and do it* have the Love of God (vs. 19-21). They draw close to Christ to live on *every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God*. They show the Life in the Light, which is really the manifest Love. Christ loves peculiarly those who possess the life and manifest the light of God. All three—love, light, and life—are revealed in Christ's words touching this experience with His mother and His brothers. Notice the separate elements in His statement, which correspond perfectly with the Parable of the Sower and the parabolic illustration of the candle.

My mother and my brethren are those who hear the Word of God and whom I love most dearly. They hear because they alone possess My life as kin to Me; they are born again. Therefore, they do My Word. That is, they manifest the life possessed and the love received when shining the Light through obedience to God's directives heard in the Word.

Christ's words in *Luke 8:21* might be paraphrased thusly:

*These hearers are the ones with whom I really fellowship in love, because they possess the life of Myself and of My Father. I fellowship in that same mutual life with these, and fellowship in the love and light which radiates from their lives as they do the good works of My Father Who is in heaven.*¹⁸

In that manner Luke finalizes the comprehensive candor and reality of this beginning of parables from Christ. He means for us, who hear this parable and this exposition of it, to evaluate the fellowship with Christ that we have, or do not have. Only those with changed hearts from the spiritual life one has received can hear the things of the Spirit of God. Only the real hearers manifest eternal life in their lives with their good works. And only those kinds of hearers are loved in the special way which Christ loves the Father and the Father loves Him. Loving fellowship with Christ is the ultimate reward for those who are enabled to *hear the word of God and do it*. This fellowship with and special love from Christ is the most momentous explicative concerning eternal destiny.

The serious questions raised by this parable are these:

“With what meaning and to what effect have I heard the Gospel of Christ; and with what meaning and to what effect do I presently hear the Word of God? What kind of ground am I?”

Christ loves, and fellowships with His spiritual love, only those *good ground* hearers who are inspired by the Word, who bring forth fruit with perseverance—*who hear the word of God and do it*. Amen.

¹⁸ Author's paraphrase of *Luke 8:21*.