

Becoming Good Soil

Listen then to the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown with seed beside the road (or literally "path"). The one sown with seed on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But the one sown with seed on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much."Matthew 13:18-23

Seeds that fell along the path:

*When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the **evil one** comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown with seed beside the road (or literally "path").*

How does a path form? By people continually walking over it. Many people have had their lives trampled upon over and over again. This speaks of our relationships with others. The bible metaphorically speaks of the hard ground as being fallow. While fallow ground refers to uncultivated soil, the Bible also uses the term figuratively to represent the spiritual condition of human hearts and minds. There are multitudes of reasons why hearts and minds become hardened.

Signs of a hardening heart:

- People sometimes entertain bitterness or resentment due to hurt caused by others. Sometimes, that hurt is caused intentionally. Oftentimes, however, it's simply a misunderstanding.
- Someone who felt they were wronged and refused to forgive the offending person.
- Indifference can be an indicator of a hardened heart. Some folks find themselves shut down to God, the church, the Bible—even other people.

- Pride often indicates a hardened heart. This form of self-protection can be bold or quiet. Ultimately, pride leads us to trust ourselves more than God. We might notice a refusal of His wisdom in certain situations we encounter or the correction given to us by others.

*Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; **break up your fallow ground,** for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and **rain righteousness upon you.** Hosea 10:12*

We must break up the hardened attitudes of our hearts through **forgiveness, genuine repentance** and **humility**. Do not give the **evil one** a foothold into your life.

Seeds that fell on rocky soil:

*The one sown with seed on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet **he has no firm root in himself,** but is only temporary, and when **affliction or persecution** occurs **because of the word,** immediately he falls away.*

This soil represents those people who have a good start in the race of the Christian life, only to fade well before the finish. The passage says that this is caused by either of two things, affliction or persecution. The affliction and persecution in this passage occurs because of the word of God.

Affliction: The word affliction in this context means "pressure". If we desire to live a holy life according to God's word we will experience pressure. Pressure from the world to conform to its lifestyle and value systems. Pressure from the evil one who is always ready to point a finger towards us when we struggle. Pressure on the job when you refuse to do something that violates your conscience. Pressure to take a stand for truth. Pressure to compromise in relationships. The list goes on.

Persecution: definition: To pursue in a manner to injure, grieve, or afflict; to beset with cruelty or malignity; to harass; especially, to afflict, punish, or put to death, for adherence to a particular religious creed or mode of worship.

To rightfully handle affliction and persecution our roots need to go deep. The passage speaks of a person who "*has no firm root in himself*"

The survivors that are left of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. 2 Kings 19:30

Roots go downward into the ground. They are unseen by others. This speaks to me about our personal relationship with Jesus. We draw our strength from the water of the Holy Spirit. We partake of the rich nutrients that God supplies as our roots go deeper and deeper. We develop a depth of strength and trust in God. All this is happening beneath the surface, unseen. You cannot expect to have good fruit without strong roots.

When you see a person displaying the genuine fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control) you need to realize that their roots must run deep. No root - no fruit!

The seed sown among thorns:

*the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the **anxiety of the world** and the **deceitfulness of wealth** choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

Anxiety definition: Anxiety is an emotion which is characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil and includes feelings of dread over anticipated events. Anxiety is different from fear in that fear is defined as the emotional response to a real threat, whereas anxiety is the anticipation of a future threat.

- **Nationally:** Over 40 million adults (19.1% of the population) have an anxiety disorder in the U.S. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, nearly one third of adults (32.3%) reported anxiety and depression symptoms in 2023.

- **Worldwide:** Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the world. Roughly 301 million people, an estimated 4% of the global population, have an anxiety disorder.
- **Age group:** One survey found that young people are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety than older adults. In adolescents between 13 and 18 years old, 31.9% are affected by anxiety disorder.

*1Pet 5:6-7 - Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having **cast all your anxiety on Him**, because He cares about you.*

*Isa 35:4 - Say to those with **anxious heart**, "Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The retribution of God will come, But He will save you."*

*Jer 17:7-8 - Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream; And does not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will **not be anxious** in a year of drought, Nor cease to yield fruit.*

*Phil 4:6 - **Do not be anxious** about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Deceitfulness of Wealth

Thinking that the next pay raise I get, or if I can just reach a monthly income of X, then I will be content. It's deceitful because you can spend a lifetime trying to attain to a level of prosperity that will bring contentment only to realize at the end that you were being deceived. Contentment will never materialize by our own efforts. We find our contentment knowing that we are in the hands of almighty God who orders our steps and leads us in the paths of righteousness.

The Apostle Paul found the secret.

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

We can be deceived by unwarranted shame when we feel we have less than someone else, or on the other hand, being prideful when we have more than others. We need to be careful about tying material blessings to our own good works.

Beware lest you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth. -Deuteronomy 8:17-18

We can also be deceived when we try to tie our material blessings to our spirituality. When we think our material wealth comes from having a "good" relationship with God, we deceive ourselves. Conversely, the one who thinks because of their lack of material possessions they are more spiritual in God's eyes are also deceived.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:19

Seeds that fell on good soil:

But the one sown with seed on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much."

We can see by the above text that God believes in multiplying what He sows. This is a person who not only understands the word but also *understands the intention of that*

word to multiply that which was freely given to them by the grace of God. Everything living thing that God made is good and was created to naturally multiply. God is continually sowing His word into our hearts. Let's be a people who multiply the fruit of that word by allowing it to transform us into the image of Christ and also sowing it into the lives of those around us, believing in a harvest of thirty, sixty, or one hundredfold.