

## The Good Soil (Parable of the Sower--Part 4 of 4)

(subtitle: Good Seed + Good Heart = Good Fruit)

Luke 8:4-15 (New American Standard Bible)

<sup>4</sup>When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: <sup>5</sup>“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. <sup>6</sup>Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

<sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. <sup>8</sup>**Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.**” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

<sup>9</sup>His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>And 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.*

<sup>11</sup>“Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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.

<sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>**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.**

### Introduction

Today, I am going to conclude my sermon series on the parable of the sower (part 4 of 4). Jesus says, when it comes down to salvation, there are four types of people. Depending on the fruits in their lives after they hear God’s Word, He calls them “those beside the road, those on the rocky soil, those among the thorns, and **those in the good soil.**”

In the last three Sundays, we covered the first three types of people “those beside the road,” “those on the rocky soil” and “those among the thorns.” Today, we are going to examine the fourth type of people: “those in the good soil” (v. 15).

## Content

**Recap of the previous weeks:** Three parties are engaged in our salvation business: God, We, and the devil. Two are for it. One is dead against it. It is God who offers salvation through His Word. It is we who accept the Word of God and get saved through faith and obedience. It is the devil, our enemy, who derails our salvation train in various ways: first, by snatching away God's Word. Next, he wants to thwart our salvation through **temptation, affliction, and persecution (T. A. P.)**. Jesus also warns us of the attack from inside: the 'thorns' in our heart, He calls. They are **worries, the deceitfulness of riches, and lusts**. They grow together in our heart with God's Word, choke the life out of God's Word, and leave us unfruitful in our walk with God. To be fruitful in our life, we must guard our heart and weed out those chokers of God's Word in us.

Today, we are going to pay attention to the type of heart condition which Jesus calls "the good soil." This is what we all want to be. The good soil. Jesus explains who belong to this category in verses 8 and 15 in today's text. ***8 Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.*** ***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.***

Let me elaborate on these two verses a little further.

v. 8: ***Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.*** The good soil produces a crop a hundred times as great.

It is no brainer. Seed and soil are inseparable. Good seed needs good soil. Good soil needs good seed. Without the help from the good soil, the good seed cannot produce a crop a hundred times as great. The condition of soil determines the outcome of the crop. E.g. My tomato plant. Someone compared his tomato plants to mine the other day saying, "How come does yours look so tall and big?" The secret is in the soil. The fertilized potting soil. The good soil.

v. 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 seed in the good soil bears fruit:** Here, Jesus points out three essential prerequisites for bearing fruit in the believer's life: First, **an honest and good heart**. Next, **holding onto God's Word fast**. Thirdly, **perseverance**.

Let's check them out one by one.

**Honest and good heart:**

What is the honest and good heart? It is the heart that cherishes God's Word. Remember the seed here? The Word of God. Remember the good soil here? It is your honest and good heart. With the honest and good heart, we are **eager** to listen to God's Word. With the honest and good heart, we **love** God's Word more than thousand pieces of gold or silver. E.g. The Berean believers: *Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so* (Acts 17:11). That's the honest and good heart.

With the honest and good heart, we also **obey** God's Word. E.g. The Methodist slogan "open hearts, open minds, and open doors" is lovely. The open minds and the open hearts mean to be open-minded with each other and welcoming each other in the church. So far so good. Please note here, though, that we apply such openness to each other. Horizontally. Among us. But we should go one more step further. We must keep our heart and mind open to God our Father as well. We need to know the biblical meaning of the 'open heart' and the 'open mind.'

Listen. The 'open heart' in the Bible means the heart that is ready to listen and obey God (Acts 16:14). The 'open mind' is the mind that understands the Scripture (Luke 24:45).

We can be the most open-minded congregation in the world, yet, if we fail to understand the Scripture, our openness means nothing to Christ. I have seen some congregations (and individuals) who are very welcoming, yet their minds are totally closed to God and Jesus (to the point where they abandon God's Word). You can be the most open-hearted person in the world. Yet, if you fail to listen and obey Jesus, you are not open-hearted to God at all. Beware the closed heart and closed mind toward God. Pray for an honest and good heart that is always open to God. Ask the Lord for the heart that always obeys the Lord.

**Hold it fast** (onto the Word of God): Let's consider the meaning of hold onto fast. It reminds me of some dogs that would not let go their bites. That tight grip. To hold fast onto the Word of God means not easily let go of God's Word in you. It means to keep holding onto the Word of God in your heart for a long time so that you can bring it out and rely on it over and over again in times of need. E.g. Mary the Mother of Jesus kept all the prophecies on Jesus her son in her heart (Gabriel, Shepherds, Simeon): *Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart* (Luke 2:19, 2:51). Even as she witnessed the violent death of her son on the cross, she was holding onto God's Word that was treasured up in her heart for all those years. Those words of God carried her through.

**Bear fruit with perseverance.** To persevere: its literal meaning is 'to remain under, endure under, suffer, tolerate, or sustain.' **Not to give up in difficult times.** To endure in trials and tribulations. In the best times and worst times. Thick and thin. Through and through. E.g. It reminds me of the Marriage vow. *From this day forward, for better for*

worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part... keep only onto your spouse. That is perseverance.

Perseverance is a must to bear fruit in our walk with God. God also wants us to have perseverance developed in our character along with other virtues such as knowledge, self-control, and godliness (2 Peter 1:6).

**Perseverance does not come automatically.** One thing unique about perseverance is this: it only comes through life's adversities and trials: (*Paul the Apostle says*)... *we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance*** (Romans 5:3). This is our spiritual reality. Do you want to have character in you? Then, expect afflictions and tribulations in your life. Perseverance is a product of God's sanctifying process in us. E.g. Imagine the refining process for gold and silver.

In your spiritual covenant with God, somewhere in the fine prints you have not read, God says, *I will equip you with perseverance through testing of your faith* (James 1:3). To make you perfect and complete, He will let you go through trials (James 1:4). Don't despair, though. God also gives you perseverance and encouragement through the Scriptures (Romans 15:4-5).

**In times of affliction, we need perseverance.** Why perseverance? You may ask. Because, without it, we cannot make it through in times of affliction and tribulation. Consider Job: *We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings* (James 5:11).

**Perseverance is also needed in the end times:** why perseverance? Because, we need it in the end times. In the last days, Jesus says, Christians will be hated and persecuted. Luke 21:17-19 says: <sup>17</sup> *and you will be hated by all because of My name.* <sup>18</sup> *Yet not a hair of your head will perish.* <sup>19</sup> **By your endurance** you will gain your lives.--Our perseverance will help us preserve our lives.

The Book of Revelation confirms the necessity of perseverance in the life of believers in the end times so that we may not grow weary: *and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary* (Revelation 2:3). Perseverance also helps us to keep the commandments of God and our faith in Jesus (Revelation 14:12).

## Conclusion

Our heart is the soil. God is the sower. He sows His Word in our heart. If the soil fails to produce a good crop, the sower would be disappointed. So would be our God if we fail to produce a good fruit in our walk with Him. In order to please our God, and to give the best growing environment for God's Word in our heart, we must prepare our hearts to be honest and good so that the pure and life-giving seed of God's Word may work best and bear most fruit that would bring glory to His name and culminate in our salvation. When we have done

so through perseverance, we will receive what God has promised: eternal life (Hebrews 10:36).

A seed for you to sow in your heart today: 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Bear fruit with it through good heart, holding onto fast, and through perseverance. Amen.