

CHRIST ... and His commentary on preaching
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(LUKE 8: 4-15)

The parable of the sower was perhaps the best known of the Saviour's sermons. The Lord explained how the sowing of the seed represented the preaching of the Gospel, and His remarks were both stimulating and challenging.

The Stolen Seed

" A sower went out to sow his seed . . . and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." It was good seed, which was never allowed to germinate and take root. When Christ interpreted this section of His parable, He indicated that in like manner Satan takes the word of Truth from the hearts of people, lest they should believe and be saved. And in that one great statement Christ revealed the setting of Biblical doctrines. Man is at the heart of all spiritual struggle. The object of God's love, and the desire of the great Sower, humanity needs the Word of God ; yet every attempt to sow the good seed in human hearts is challenged by evil. The Pharisees in every Gospel service supply evidence in support of Christ's statement.

The Starved Seed

" And some fell upon a rock I and as soon as it was sprung Lip, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." The profession of abundant life was not squalled by its depth of root. The results were superficial ; they were on the surface, and consequently the plant was unable to survive. " These," said Christ, " have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." Even the Lord had such people among His many followers. At a certain point in His ministry, they turned back and followed him no more." Real evangelism is recognized by, the depth of the work done, and not by its seeming popularity. Judas illustrates this type of follower. He received the word with joy, and appeared to be a most sincere disciple ; yet in the hour of testing he revealed that his profession of faith did not rest on spiritual realities.

The Strangled Seed

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it." Jesus continued, " These 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." It is not said that the seed failed to germinate; neither is it suggested that a harvest was non-existent. The growth of the plant was seriously hindered, because parasites drained the earth of energy. Every church has its quota of people who belong to this disappointing category. The rich young ruler never brought spiritual fruit to perfection, because his love of riches ruined his spiritual perception. Demas, one of the most promising of Paul's associates, ultimately left the apostle, because the pleasures of the world had attracted his soul. This young man might have become eternally famous ; but alas, he disappeared in a wilderness of overgrowing worldliness.

The Successful Seed

" And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." The disciples easily understood that this kind of seed represented " they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth

CHRIST ... and His commentary on preaching fruit with patience." And in this way Christ summed up the results of preaching the Gospel. Perhaps every minister should be careful in counting heads; it would be safer to count hearts. Spontaneous responses can be most thrilling, but sometimes the better converts are they who seem reluctant to respond. An uplifted hand is insufficient unless it be propelled by a broken heart. In like manner, every minister should be hesitant before he becomes disheartened. No one sees seed taking root ; one must have patience, and learn to believe that the unseen is really taking place. A faithful sower is always of more value than a successful reaper. And if Demas supplied the Biblical illustration for the one type of seed, Timothy may provide the example of the seed well sown. He had "known the holy scriptures from his youth up," and because divine truth had taken root in his heart, the boy grew to be a man of God whose consecrated service influenced a world. The realization that some would be lost did not prevent the farmer from sowing seed. He made allowances for loss by sowing additional seed. We must emulate his example. Let us sow to our maximum capacity; then we shall not enter God's presence empty-handed. The fields are very big ; the seed is very plentiful ; but there is a shortage of sowers! I wonder why?

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