

**Mark 4: 26-29; “First the Blade”, Session # 3 on the Parable of the Growing Seed,  
Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

**Mark 4: 26-29** – “And Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.” “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

**Review –**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> two Sessions of studying this Parable we have looked at what some of the words of the Parable represent. I said to you that from my study of the Parable it appears to me that the “man” of the Parable who is scattering seed on the ground represents Christ in the first place, and then flowing out of His earthly ministry, for the whole rest of the Church age, the “man” represents gospel ministers and those who preach and share the gospel. It is true that Christ “reaps” the life of a believer when He chooses to call us home to glory. But it is also true on the greater level of the church, that at the end of the age, He will put in the sickle because the harvest has come.

**There is a 3-fold reaping that is talked about in the Scriptures.** 1<sup>st</sup> – There is a reaping at the conversion of the soul to Christ. This is mentioned in John 4: 36 – “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” 2<sup>nd</sup> – There is a reaping which takes place at the end of the believer’s life, when Christ sees that their life is ripe, He puts in the sickle as it says in verse 29 of the Parable. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – There is a reaping which takes place at the end of the world when Christ returns. The Harvest of the Great Day when Christ gathers the wheat into His barn. Matthew 13: 30 – “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers,. ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn.”

**The scattering of the seed takes place on the “ground” of men’s hearts.** I spoke to you in the last Session about how it was, that Christ in His earthly ministry sowed the seed of His word to the woman at the well, and how He reaped her soul. She believed in Him and then she went to the men of her town and told them about her interview with Christ; how He told her everything about herself, which she did not think He could possibly have known unless He was a prophet, and unless He was the Christ.

I told you that these actions of this woman are a good example of the “earth yielding crops of itself”. And I also told you in what sense we can understand Christ not knowing how the plant sprouted and grew. It was in the sense of His humanity. The humanity of Christ knew nothing future except it was instructed by His Deity, which of course it was at a number of points, and at other points, not. (That is, in the time of His earthly ministry) In my mind it is probable that this limitation of His humanity’s knowledge ceased when He was glorified, in the time when He ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

In the case of those who preach and share the word and the gospel, we will not know how the plant is established, and how it grows. But what we can know is that when the word is implanted in the heart as the seed of righteousness, it does a work there which is on-going, in the life of the one who believes in Jesus. It is a most certain and definite work, of being planted, and then growing so that first the blade is seen, then the ear or head of grain is seen, and then the full ear or head of grain is finally seen in the growth of the plant of the Christian heart. Even though we cannot see how it may be taking place at all it is still taking place. And sometimes we do not a rapid progress in its growth because it is slow growing, but still it is taking place.

**Ecclesiastes 8: 17** – “Then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun.” “For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will find it; moreover; though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”

This is what we want to look into more carefully during this time; the sure progression of God’s grace in the soul of the regenerate believer is what is being talked about in verse 28. The earth, or the field of the believer’s heart yields crops by itself. A true Christian’s life starts out as a seed which is planted by the gospel minister and it grows in stages until Christ knows that that person’s life is ready to be reaped. For it says in verse 29 it says – “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” So let’s think about these things a little more.

**1. First – The “man” scatters the seed, and it is planted, and it germinates by God’s Almighty Power.**

**Both the labor of the man scattering the seed of the word, and the work of God in relation to it, are vitally important to the plant’s establishment.**

**a. The work of the “man” preaching the gospel.**

**Acts 11: 19-23** – “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.” “But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.” “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” “Then the news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.” “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” “And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

So, you see here, a number of preaching labors of men with the gospel, following the persecution that arose over Stephen. Some from Cyprus and Cyrene, when they came to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And it says that the hand of the Lord was with them. This means that the Lord Himself saw to it that their word, the seed, would come with power to the hearts of their hearers and a great number of them would believe and be planted in Christ, spiritually speaking. When Barnabas came to investigate what had taken place, he saw the grace of God in their lives in their good words and righteous actions, and He was glad, for he knew that it was a true work of God that had taken place in them and was continuing to evidence itself in the life of these new believers.

**b. The Work of God work in a secret and purposeful way.**

**Matthew 15: 10-14** – When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand: ‘Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what come out of the mouth, this defiles a man.’ “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard that saying?’ “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” “Let them alone.” “They are blind leaders of the blind.” “And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

This verse 13 was spoken in the context of Jesus’ having said that it is not what goes into the mouth which defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. The disciples came and told Jesus that the Pharisees were offended when they heard that saying. But Jesus answers by showing why this offense of the Pharisees took place. It took place because they had not been planted by Father into the good soil of His grace. Unless they were planted in regeneration, they would not be able to see the truth about the

statement which they were offended by. They were blind leaders of the blind, Jesus said. And as such, they in time would be uprooted from their positions of leaders, and both they and those who also were blind, who would follow them, they would all fall into the ditch of great error and fall under God's judgment. How does the Father plant the plant?

**Romans 6: 5** – “For if we have been united together (planted together) in the likeness of Christ's death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

The Father plants the seed of righteousness in the heart of the one believing in Jesus, by really and actually causing them to die to sin and to live to righteousness. He raised them from the dead, spiritually speaking, and give them a new nature the the likeness of Christ's death, to hate sin, and to love righteousness. We who have been planted together with Christ have a new heart, have received a new birth, and someday shall be raised from the dead to a glorious resurrection because He has been raised from the dead, having accomplished redemption for us.

**2. The Plant having been planted in this good way of the regeneration of the believing sinner's heart, immediately begins to grow and will in a short time bring forth a blade.**

**Matthew 10: 32** – “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”

The blade is confession of Christ before the church and others, making public profession of faith. The person being baptized is confessing that they needed Christ's finished work of righteousness and sufferings on their behalf. In the waters of baptism they are saying before the witnesses in the church that they will walk in newness of life, loving God and keeping His commandments. They are also implying by this public profession that they will not go back to the sinful lifestyle that they once lived; that of self-righteous pride, or the sins of the flesh, or the sins of their spirit, but that they will press on to know the Lord and walk with the Lord. The reason that they can say this and believe that they will not depart from Christ is that they have come to realize that God's seed is in them, and remaining with them.

**1st John 3: 9 and 10** – “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”

Whoever is born of God does not sin does not mean that the Christian will be sinless in their walk with God and Christ, It means that whatever comes forth from the Holy Spirit's working in their life, has as it source perfect purity. In that sense the one who has been born of God does not sin. The Christian's thoughts, word, and actions, although imperfect, are, when they are “in the Spirit, will lead to the practice of righteousness because they have been born of God. They will not therefore go remain in sin or continue in sin that grace might abound, but will confess their sins and be cleansed of them. In this way they will learn to practice righteousness, and love the brethren. The blade of confession leads to the head of practicing righteousness.

**John Gill says the seed that remains in them is** – “the grace of the Spirit, the internal principle of grace in the soul, the new nature, or new man formed in the soul, is meant; which seminally contains all grace in it, and which, like seed, springs up and gradually increases, and always abides; and is pure and incorruptible, and neither sins itself, nor encourages sin, but opposes, checks, and prevents it.”

**And he cannot sin because he is born of God....** “the meaning is, he that is born of God, as he is born of God, or that which is born of God in him, the new man, or new creature, cannot sin; for that is pure and holy; there is nothing sinful in it, nor can anything that is sinful come out of it, or be done by it; it is the

workmanship of the Holy Spirit of God; it is a good work, and well pleasing: in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin with delight; and an incorruptible seed, which neither corrupts nor is corrupted; and though it is as yet an imperfect work, it is not impure.”

### **3. Then when the Christian Plant is fed and watered by further preaching of the word, and further working of God’s grace in the heart, it grows and puts out a “head” or an “ear”.**

This “ear” or “head” of grain is what is going to eventually be harvested as a life lived unto God. But it takes time to grow up into Christ. The Christian will grow with a growth that is from God. But they themselves will help promote this growth as they go about to live their life in obedience to God’s word. They do this by faith in Christ, realizing that without His grace and strength and help, they can do nothing to cause their own growth. Therefore they strive to grow in obedience to God’s word, and they think and praying of how they can grow up into Christ-likeness. That is the way that a Christian can bear fruit unto God.

**Psalm 1: 1-4** – “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” “The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”

So here we see how it is that the blade becomes the ear or the head of grain. The Christian who is pressing on to maturity does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He does not stand in the path of sinners. He does not sit in the seat of the scornful, but he rather delights himself in the word of God, the Bible, the law of the Lord. And in it, he meditates day and night. And when a Christian does this, they will be like a tree planted by rivers of water, and their leaf, or their profession of faith will not wither, so that people look at their life and conclude that really they are a dead plant, spiritually speaking. No, their leaf will be green. And as a result of this pressing on to know the Lord, they will prosper in whatever they undertake in the name of Christ and to the glory of God, and for the good of themselves and other people.

**Colossians 1: 3-10** – “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...” So, I hope that you can see this wonderful language of verses 5 and 6 where Paul talks about the Colossian saints having “heard the word of the truth of the gospel, which had come to them in power. Paul says that same word of truth has come to all the world as well, and it (the word of truth, the gospel) was bringing forth fruit in all the world, even as our Parable says – The earth brings forth crops of itself. In the case of the saints at Colosse, this fruit (or this growth in grace and bringing forth good works and evidences of grace in the fruit of the Spirit in the love of the brethren, had been taking place since the day they heard and knew the grace of God in truth. This is the head of grain, when saints mature in this good fashion.

**1st Peter 1: 22-25** – “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because all

flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.” “The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

We see here that the saints who Peter is writing to had purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit’s working and help to them and with them. This resulted in a sincere love of the brethren. But Peter tells them to grow up into Christ by loving one another fervently with a pure heart. And he tells them why they would be able to do this. They had been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. That is the head of grain. In contrast to this, all flesh, all unredeemed humanity is as grass and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The unredeemed person’s life will wither and their beauty will fade and fall off the plant of their life. But the word of the Lord will be the means of growing and building the saint’s life to ripe fruition, and eternal life.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3: 17 and 18** – “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” “To Him be the glory both now and forever.” “Amen.”

The saints need to be on their guard against falling from their own steadfastness, and being led away with the error of the wicked. They must hold fast the truth, and persevere in faith, holiness, and righteousness by the grace of God which has been given them. They must consciously study to grow in that grace and in their knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May He have all the glory for all of our growth and whatever we are enabled to do by His grace, to obey and glorify God.

**The Preacher’s Homiletical Commentary says this:**

“The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself.” In other words, what is here taught is not the vitality of the seed, nor the activity of the two Sowers, but the productiveness of the soil. Only commit a seed to the earth, and “the earth will bring forth fruit of herself.” The growth of a wheat-field is a long and tedious process. Grain has its own laws, according to which it must germinate and shoot: you cannot make it grow otherwise than God appoints. It has its successive stages through which it is bound to pass: you cannot have an ear before its stalk is tall. It lies exposed to atmospheric influences, both bad and good: you cannot, with all your husbandry, hinder the wind from causing it to strike deeper root, or the frost from nipping its too tender shoots. In fact, the farmer can do very little in the matter. Only the great earth, stored by God with the chemical conditions of fruitfulness, and lying ever open by day and night to God’s atmospheric influences—to rain and dew, to sun and wind, to frost and electricity—only this wonderful earth carries on the process. In spite of so much that appears to war against the plant, damping the farmer’s hope, somehow the earth never fails after all to “bring forth fruit of herself.”