

Parable of the Soils

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By Bill Parker

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Announcer: Welcome to Reign of Grace. This program is brought to you by Reign of Grace Media Ministries, an outreach ministry of Eager Avenue Grace Church in Albany, Georgia. It is our pleasure and privilege to present to you the Gospel message of the sovereign grace and glory of God in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that today's program will be a blessing to you. Thank you for listening and now for today's program.

Bill Parker: Now today I'm going to be preaching from the book of Matthew 13 and I'm going to be preaching on the parable of the soils. Now most people have heard that title or that parable that I'm going to deal with as the parable of the sower and the seed, and that's okay too, you can title it either way, but the emphasis of this parable is the fact that there are four types of soils which represent four types of hearers when the Gospel is preached.

Now in Matthew 13 in verse 1, it says, "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat," and what it was, it was so crowded on the shore that he had to get on the ship to teach, to talk to the crowd, and he spoke, verse 3, "And he spake many things unto them in parables." Now a parable, as you know, is an earthly story; it's a story that uses earthly things, earthly persons, symbols, things, objects, to teach a higher, spiritual, eternal lesson so that each thing in the parable or the main issues of the parable, is represented by an earthly object. Now a parable, you can't make everything in a parable mean something or some deep dark meaning, but you have to take just the general message of the parable and here in the parable of the soils, the Lord tells us exactly what each thing means. He's talking about the spreading of the Gospel.

Now here in Matthew 13, you have a series of parables and what the Lord is doing in these parables is he's teaching his disciples the issues, the truths, the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Now the kingdom of heaven, or sometimes referred to as the kingdom of God in these parables, is not heaven itself or the future glory of perfection that's in heaven, but he's talking about the state of the church and his rule and reign over all things in the establishment and growth of his church between the time of his first coming and his ascension unto glory and his second coming, that's the last days or the

time of the new covenant, the New Testament, and over which Christ rules and reigns and disposes of all things to save his people from their sins, establish his church throughout the world, and that's the kingdom of heaven. Now in that kingdom on earth, there's a mixed multitude. There are believers and unbelievers and over in Matthew 25, he tells us in another parable of the judgment how in the end he's going to come and in that day he's going to separate the ones he identifies as sheep, which are the ones, they are God's elect people for whom Christ died and redeemed them from their sins, who are regenerated and called by the Spirit in the new birth through the preaching of the Gospel, he's going to separate those sheep from the goats, which refers to unbelievers who will perish eternally, the Scripture says. But before that time, there is going to be a mixture, even within the church there will be a mixture, and that's what this first parable talks about, the parable of the soils. Even in the church there is going to be different kinds of people: there are going to be believers and there are going to be unbelievers and there are going to be false professors and true professors.

So that's what this parable is about. Now remember this about the parables: they are not children's stories now; they weren't given to simplify the Gospel, they were given to illustrate the Gospel and teach the truths of the kingdom of heaven. So in this parable, he begins in verse 3 and he says, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow," like a farmer sowing seed in the ground. It says in verse 4, "when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side," some of the seeds that he sowed fell by the way side, "and the fowls," the birds, "came and devoured them up," ate them up. They didn't have any opportunity to take root. They weren't sown, the seed wasn't sown in good ground. He says in verse 5, "Some fell upon stony places," stony ground, stony soil, "where they had not much earth," it was more rock than earth, "and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." So that's the second type of soil. Then he says in verse 7, "And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them," that's the third type of soil. In verse 8 he says, "But other fell into good ground," good earth, "and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold," varying degrees of fruit here but they all grew. And he says, verse 9, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now many of the parables conclude that way; if you've got ears to hear, then you hear.

Now let me say this before I go to the meaning of this parable over in another section of Matthew 13, and I want you to know this because this is scriptural: if you have spiritual, you know, we think about physical life and you have physical ears and hearing that you can hear my voice today, physical eyes that you can see me on the television screen, and so who gave you those physical ears to hear? Who gave you those physical eyes to see? Well, the answer obviously is God did. You didn't get them yourself by your own power. God created it. God gave them to you. It's the same way in spiritual life. It's the same way in spiritual hearing and spiritual sight. As Christ gave sight to the blind and he gave hearing to the deaf, he gives spiritual hearing and spiritual sight to his people. He said, "My sheep hear my voice." And so what I want you to know before we get into this is this: if you hear the Gospel of God's grace in Christ and believe it, then you have God to thank for that hearing. You can't say, "Well, I heard it because I'm better than others who refuse to hear it." It wasn't an act of your own will, God made you willing by giving you

spiritual ears and spiritual eyes. Now, when does God give a sinner spiritual ears and spiritual eyes? Well, the answer is obvious, it's when they are born again. That's why Christ told Nicodemus, "You must be born again by the Spirit of God."

So what we're going to see in the parable of the soils here is that three of these types of hearers, that's what these soils represent, sinners hearing the Gospel in different ways, three of these types were not given spiritual ears and spiritual eyes. One was and I'll show you that. But over in verse 18 of Matthew 13, he gives the meaning of the parable and he told his disciples, he says, "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower." Verse 19, listen to this, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom." Now right away we know what the seed is, the sower and the seed. Who is the sower, for example? Well, the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ and his ministers who sow the word of God, the word of the kingdom. They go about preaching the word. Christ is the living Word of God, Scripture says. Christ is the living Word. Christ is the incarnate Word. The Bible says in John 1:14, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." That's Christ, the God-man.

And the Bible is the written word of God. Now this Bible which is the written word of God, is the book of Christ. He said in John 5:39 when he was speaking to the Pharisees who claimed to be doctors of the Scripture and experts on the word, he said, "You search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life," he said, "they are they which testify of me." He said, "Moses wrote of me." He said, "Abraham saw my day." He sat his disciples down before he ascended unto glory and he taught them of the things concerning himself and his death on the cross, his burial and his resurrection out of Moses, the law and the prophets and the Psalms. So this written word is the book of Christ but also, if the Gospel is preached, if the word of the kingdom is preached, then Christ is the subject of the uttered or the preached word and that's what we need to understand. Everything revolves around, centers around and is built upon the preaching of Christ.

So he says "the word of the kingdom," well, what is the word of the kingdom? It's the Gospel. The word "Gospel" means "good news," and who is it good news to? You know, if you have invested a lot of money in the stock market, then you've heard a lot of bad news these days, haven't you? But now if the economy would all of a sudden make a turn upward and everything be prosperous and the stock market went way up, that would be good news to you. If you were sick with some dreaded disease, some cancer or heart disease, something that's terminal, that is, sick unto death, if a doctor would call you on the phone or call you in the office and say, "I have the cure, here it is," that would be good news to you. Do you see what I'm saying? The Gospel is good news but to whom? It's good news to sinners who see their need of mercy and grace and unconditional love; see their need of salvation by Christ.

You see, if you think you can save yourself by your works, then I'm going to tell you something: the Gospel will not be good news to you. If you're determined to establish your own righteousness before God, then the word of the kingdom will not be good news. The Gospel is the word of the kingdom. The Gospel, Paul writes in Romans 1, is the

Gospel of God, it's not the Gospel of man. It didn't originate with man, it's totally from God; it's a revelation from God.

The Gospel, he said, is the Gospel that concerns a person. It's the preaching of a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God and man in one person. In Romans 1, Paul expressed it like this, he said, "Concerning God's Son, who was made of the seed of David," David of old, "according to the flesh." In other words, he's speaking there of the humanity of Christ, the sinless humanity of Christ which came through the lineage of King David, the tribe of Judah, because it was determined by God and prophesied in the Old Testament, specifically in Genesis 49, that "the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes," Shiloh meaning peace, Christ is the Prince of Peace. So Christ came from the tribe of Judah. That's why he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. That's his humanity, his sinless humanity. He was born of the Virgin Mary as he was conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was not born of man, he was not born in the lineage of Adam, he was not born in sin. His birth was a miraculous birth and the angel told Joseph that, "His name shall be called Jesus," Jehovah our Savior, "for he shall save his people from their sins. His name shall be called Immanuel, which being interpreted is God with us."

Paul went on in Romans 1 to say that he was "declared to be the Son of God," meaning his deity, even though we who are saved are sons of God by adoption, by grace, by election, by redemption and by regeneration, Christ is the Son of God by nature. That was a title that could only be given to him as he is God, and he was declared to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead." You see, he is both God and man in one person. That's the word of the kingdom.

Paul went on over in Romans 1:16 and he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," that is what the word of the kingdom is, it's the Gospel of Christ, the Messiah, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." And he went on in verse 17 and said, "For therein," in that Gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

So the word of the kingdom is the preaching of righteousness. Noah was described as a preacher of righteousness. Well, whose righteousness do we preach in the word of the kingdom? We preach the righteousness of God. Now what is that? That's the righteousness that God sent his Son to the earth as God-man to work out by his obedience unto death. You see, the Gospel, the word of the kingdom, the seed sown, is not the preaching of man's righteousness, it's not the preaching of man's works or efforts to be righteous. In fact, the Gospel shows just the opposite, it shows man in his lost state, depraved and fallen in Adam, guilty before God, standing there in his filthy rags of the best efforts that he can muster up. The Gospel drives us out of ourselves in repentance to show that we cannot be saved or justified or holy or glorified based on our best efforts to keep the law. The Gospel leaves us with no hope but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Christ is my righteousness for he was made sin, Christ took my sins upon himself, they were accounted and charged to him. Christ who knew no sin, he was made sin for us, the

Scripture says, he who knew no sin, he was totally innocent in himself but guilty because of our sins charged to him, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He was made sin so that we could be made righteousness, not by our works but in him. That's the grace of God.

Then the Gospel is called the preaching of the cross. You see, it's on the cross that Christ bore away, put away the sins of his people. It's on the cross that Christ established the only righteousness whereby God could be just and justified, and the Gospel commands every sinner who hears it to believe that Gospel. That's our salvation, it's the Gospel of God's grace. It's the Gospel of the free gift of God to sinners who cannot earn salvation and do not deserve it, and that's what this word of the kingdom is.

So he says in verse 19, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." Now there is the first soil, the way side hearer, you might say. This is a person who hears the Gospel with the physical ear and may have some thought about it, that's why it says "sown in his heart," not planted in his heart, you see, not taking root, but that person really turns away from it, has no interest in it, is not concerned about it. He's not concerned about sin. He's not concerned about how God saves sinners. He's not concerned about death or hell or heaven. That's the way side hearer.

He's totally uninterested in the preaching of the word of the kingdom and so many times when the Gospel goes out, there will be people who will just turn a deaf ear to it. They don't want to listen. They don't want to consider it. They don't want to think about it. That's the way side hearer, and oh, how sad that is that people would not sit and give heed to the preaching of the word of life. The word of the kingdom is the word of life. My friend, this Gospel, Paul said, is the preaching of a message that is so important that it comes down this way: it's either life unto life or death unto death. Life unto life to those whom God brings to faith in Christ, death unto death to those who turn a deaf ear to it.

Now he comes to the next hearer, he says in verse 20, he says, "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon," now that word "anon" would mean like "now or immediately," "with joy receiveth it." The indication here is this person hears it and he immediately latches onto it with joy, but he really hasn't thought about the implications. In other words, he's like the person that Christ said who didn't count the cost.

So he goes on in verse 21, it says, "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while," he endures for a while, and he says, "for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word," now that's key. Look at that in verse 21. He doesn't say just when trouble comes or persecution comes, but it's when trouble and persecution come because of the word, because of the Gospel. This is a specific persecution and tribulation. And he says, "by and by he is offended." And he leaves it.

Now the stony ground here, this type of soil in this parable of the soils, this is rocky ground. If you went out and sowed seed on rocky ground, there are more rocks than there are dirt, the seed can't get a hold down in the ground, it can't take root and grow. It might spring up a little bit for a while but when the sun comes, it's going to be scorched and it doesn't take root. You could water it but the roots aren't down far enough to get the water, you see. So this is the type of hearer who receives it immediately, quickly, and then when the trouble comes over the Gospel, then he leaves it.

Now there are many stony ground hearers. Have you heard the Gospel and received it and not suffered persecution and tribulation? Do you know that the Gospel by its very nature will always bring some form and some degree of persecution and trouble from the world. We're in a battle, the Scripture says. Believers are in the world but they are not of the world and so Christ told his disciples in the book of John 15, he said, "Marvel not if the world hate you," he said, "for it hated me before it hated you." Our Lord was despised and rejected of men. He was lied upon. He was spat upon. He was disrespected. He was actually hated because of his message of grace. That exposed the evil deeds of the best and the most religious and zealous men of the day. You see, when a sinner hears that all of his efforts to make himself righteous before God are evil deeds because they deny the glory of God, they deny Christ, they are the fruit of unbelief, unless God turns that sinner's heart to Christ away from his own works, that sinner is going to hate the light, John 3:19 and 20. The light has come into the world but men loved darkness and hate the light.

So the Gospel is called the preaching of the offense of the cross. It's offensive to man. It's offensive to his dignity, to his self-righteousness, and so the Gospel is hated. So Christ told them in John 16, he said, "They'll throw you out of their synagogues and they'll kill you thinking they are doing God a service." He said, "Blessed are you when men persecute you and revile you and say all manner of evil against you." It's going to happen and when that message of grace offends the ears of the self-righteous, they'll turn on you and that's when the stony ground hearer leaves.

Now in verse 22, here's the third kind. He said, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." This would be a person who hears the Gospel and claims to believe it but he has no time for it. He's got other things to do. The cares of the world have taken up his mind, consumed his heart and his time. The deceitfulness of riches, he wants to make money. Now there's nothing wrong with wanting to make money but if that consumes your heart and your time to the point to where you have no time for the worship of God, no time for the word of God, no time for the people of God, this is the category of soil that you're in, it's the deceitful, the person who is deceived by his own desires. So this is the thorny ground hearer and, my friend, don't be a thorny ground hearer.

Then lastly in verse 23 it says, "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it," he understands it savingly with the eye and ear of faith, and he understands it "which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an

hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Now here's the person whose heart has been prepared by the power of the Holy Spirit who gives life, who changes that heart, who gives a new heart to receive the Gospel. This is the broken and contrite heart. This is the heart that's broken over sin and sees the necessity of salvation by the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

You see, if you have a good heart, you didn't have it naturally. The Bible says, "There is none good, no, not one. The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?" So if my heart, if I receive the Gospel of Christ, receive Christ in my heart, it's God who gave me that heart; it's God who transformed me; it's God who gave me life, spiritual life to see my sinfulness and to see the glory and grace of God in Christ, and from that creation that God has made in that sinner who receives Christ, comes fruit. Now some will bring forth more fruit than others, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirty, but there will be fruit; it will be the fruit of repentance; it will be the fruit of works, obedience motivated by grace and love and gratitude. My friend, this is a person who has been born again and you notice here in this parable of the soils, there are three kinds of hearers who end up lost. There is only one kind of hearer that ends up saved.

What am I to do? I am to pray to God, "O Lord, give me a heart of faith. Give me the heart of repentance. Break my heart. Show me the glory of Christ. Let the Holy Spirit, Lord, let your Holy Spirit shed abroad in my heart the love of God in Christ for herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is the word of the kingdom and the Holy Spirit implants it in the heart of his people where it takes root and it grows when it is watered by the power of the Spirit in the power of the word of God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," the Scripture says, "and you shall be saved." Don't let this word fall on deaf ears. Don't let this word be received for a little while and then be taken up for the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Don't let this word be a point of contention to the point that when you are persecuted or face trouble over it, you leave it and never come back. Lay hold of Christ and never let go.

Well, I hope this passage of Scripture is now clear to you in the preaching of the word, and if you'd like to receive a copy of this message, listen to the announcer and he'll give you the details. The title of the message is "The Parable of the Soils." I hope you'll join us next week for another message from God's word.

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