

# The Parable of the Sower

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In the Parable of the Sower (or Four Soils), Jesus reveals several strategies which the enemies of Christ use to accomplish Satan's goals. See [Matthew 13:1-23](#), [Mark 4:1-20](#), and [Luke 8:1-15](#).

## Two similar parables in Matthew Chapter 13

### Both parables:

- A sower of seed, - a farmer
- A field
- The hope of a good crop at harvest time, for the farmer's own purposes & profit – to provide for his family, and to sell at market – providing for the community.
- An adversary

**Parable of the Sower (Four Soils) - Matthew 13:1–9 (ESV)** — **1** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. **2** And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. **3** And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, **6** but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. **7** Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. **8** Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. **9** He who has ears, let him hear.”

**Why did Jesus teach by telling parables? - Matthew 13:10–13 (ESV)** — **10** Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” **11** And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. **12** For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. **13** This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

**Jesus explained the Parable of the Sower in verses 18–23 (ESV)** — **18** “Hear then the parable of the sower: **19** 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 what was sown along the path. **20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. **22** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **23** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

**Parable of the Weeds (Tares) - Matthew 13:24–30 (ESV)** — **24** He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27**

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ **28** He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ **29** But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ”

**Explained in verses 36–43 (ESV)** — **36** Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” **37** He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is **the devil**. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

### Contrast the 2 parables

	Parable of the Sower	Parable of the Weeds
<b>Sower</b>	The Son of Man	Good Seed – The Son of Man Weeds – The devil
<b>Seed</b>	The Word of God	Good Seed – Sons of the Kingdom Weeds- Sons of the Evil One
<b>Field</b>	One Human Heart (extrapolated to every human)	The World (all humanity - in space & time)
<b>Adversary</b>	Nature (a fallen & cursed creation) v19 -the evil one, Satan – Mk 4:15	A competitor, or malicious enemy (the natural tendency in a fallen creation) v39 - the devil, or Satan

I believe the primary interpretation of the Parable of the Sower concerns *fruitfulness* of God’s Word in a person’s life, rather than it being restricted to a discourse on who gets into heaven or not.

The parable tells a story about a person who sows seed, and the seeds fell in four specified environments: the wayside, on rocky ground, among thorns, and in fertile soil. Jesus explains that the seed is the word of God, and the four soils represent those who hear the preaching of the word. In relating the parable to spiritual warfare, Jesus expressly states that Satan removes the word from the hearts of those who do not understand its meaning (at the wayside). Although Jesus does not describe the devil’s participation any further, I believe that the whole of scripture provides ample evidence that the devil is at work throughout the full story.

### The Parable of the Sower as explained by Jesus in the synoptic gospels

**Luke 8:11–15 (ESV)** — **11** Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. **12** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13** And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a

while, and in time of testing fall away. **14** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. **15** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

**Mark 4:14–20 (ESV)** — **14** The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. **16** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. **18** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, **19** but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **20** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

**NOTE:** The parable does NOT teach everything God does to prepare the soil for seed planting.

## Enemy Actions

Parable	Ground Description	Heart Response	Enemy Action
The Wayside	Hardened, trampled	No understanding	BLIND Steal the seed
Stony Places	Rocky, shallow soil, Burnt, little moisture	Immediate growth, No fruit	HARASS Scorch the earth
Among Thorns	Crowded field, Depleted nutrients	Secondary growth, Becomes unfruitful	DECEIVE Choke the plant
Good Soil	Fertile	Bears fruit, Produces a crop	CONTAIN Limit the crop

**2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)** — **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

## The Wayside – path, hard, trampled ground

**Text v. 19** 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 what was sown along the path.

- **Mark 4:15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.
- **Luke 8:12** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

**The word of God unto Salvation -- 2 Timothy 1:5** — he was taught by his grandmother Lois & his mother Eunice **2 T 3:15 (ESV)** — ... from childhood [Timothy had been] acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:4–6 (ESV)** — 4 ... **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 26:17–18 (ESV)** — **Jesus sent Paul** '...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

**1 Peter 1:22–25 (ESV)** — **22** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **23** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; **24** for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, **25** but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

**Romans 10:13–17 (ESV)** — **13** For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." **14** How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" **16** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**But primarily, God's chosen people -- Zechariah 7:9–14 (ESV)** — "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, **10** do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." **11** But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. **12** **They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets.** Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. **13** "As I called, and they would not hear, **14** so they called, and I would not hear," **15** says the LORD of hosts, **16** "and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate."

**Matt 13:14-15 is a quote from Isaiah 6:8–10 (ESV)** — **God commissioned the prophet**, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' **10** Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

**Romans 2:4–8 (ESV)** — 4 ...do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? **5** But **because of your hard and impenitent heart** you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. **6** He will render to each one according to his works:

7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

**Ephesians 4:17–24 (ESV)** — 17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, **due to their hardness of heart.** 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Text – Matthew 13:9 - Jesus** “He who has ears, let him hear.”

**Hebrews 3:7–13 (ESV)** — 7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, 8 **do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ 11 As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” 12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**... 19 ...we see that they were unable to enter [God’s rest] because of unbelief.

**Hebrews 4:11–13 (ESV)** — 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**Hebrews 5:11–14 (ESV)** — 11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

**Revelation 3:13 (ESV)** — 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

## **Stony Places – Rocky, shallow soil, burnt, no deep roots, little moisture**

**Text 13:20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

- **Luke 8: 13** And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.
- **Mark 4:16** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

**2 Timothy 3:10–13 (ESV)** — **10** You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

## **Among thorns – Crowded fields, depleted nutrition**

**Text 13:22** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

- **Luke 8:14** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.
- **Mark 4:18** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, **19** but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

**Hebrews 3:13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin

**2 Corinthians 9:8–10 (ESV)** — **8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. **9** As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” **10** He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

## **Good Soil - Fertile**

**Text 13:23** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

- **Luke 8:15** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

- **Mark 4:20** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

**James 3:13–18 (ESV)** — **13** Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. **15** This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. **18** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.