

SOWING THE SEED

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Luke 8:4-15 contains one of Christ's greatest parables, the Parable of the Sower. In verses 4-8, Jesus taught the parable to a large gathering of people with no explanation: "And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." His disciples then came to Christ seeking to understand the parable (Luke 8:9-10). In verses 11-15, the Lord explains the parable: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns 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. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." This parable powerfully illustrates what our role is in teaching others the gospel of Christ.

Sowing the seed

In what is known as "The Great Commission," Jesus Christ commands his disciples, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). As a follower of our Master, our job is to preach his gospel. In Christ's parable, this work was succinctly stated, "A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). What was "his seed?" "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Our job is to "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2), only God's word (1 Pet 4:11; 1 Tim 6:3-5), and all of God's word (Acts 20:20,25-27; Matt 28:20). We should purge ourselves of all evil in order to be meet for our master's use as a vessel prepared for every good work (2 Tim 2:20-21). We should yield ourselves to God and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom 6:13). But the actual work of giving increase to what is sown in the hearts of men is the Lord's.

God gives the increase

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed,

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(continued)

even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase” (1 Cor 3:5-7). All we can ever be is a tool in God’s hand, to sow the seed of the, but only God can give the increase depending on what kind of heart (or “ground”) the seed is sown in (Matt 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:4-15). We have no control at all over what kind of heart is in a person, and we cannot change that heart ourselves. The power is in the gospel (Rom 1:16-17; 1 Cor 1:18; Heb 4:12; Luke 4:32; Jer 23:29; Hos 6:5), and only God can give increase to His word in a good and honest heart. That is why we have nothing to boast about, no matter how successful our work is (1 Cor 4:6-7). Our great blessing is that God will reward us for this labor (1 Cor 3:8,14; Col 3:23-24). But the work is actually God’s: “For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9).

The reward for our labor

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, the Apostle Paul by God’s inspiration says, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” The fact that those who faithfully preach the gospel of Christ (i.e. make manifest the savor of his knowledge) are a sweet smell of Christ to God both in them that are saved and them that perish teaches us the important lesson that our job is to faithfully preach and teach His word and God will judge us according to whether or not we have done that, not according to the results. We need to labor and build wisely (1 Cor 3:10-15). But if we do, God will be pleased with us no matter what the results are. God told Ezekiel that he was not responsible for those who did not heed the warning (Ezek 3:16-21; 33:1-9). Paul too was pure from the blood of all men when he had preached to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 18:5-6; 20:26-27). And Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet 2:5) even though only he and seven other members of his family were saved (Gen 6:17-22; 7:1,10-24; 8:14-19; 1 Pet 3:20). If we too are a “preacher of righteousness,” and faithfully sow the seed of the kingdom in the hearts of men, God will be pleased with us and reward us eternally.