

Daily Bible Study

“Soil Analysis”Part-2

Mark 4:1-20

February 14-20, 2010

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – This week we continue to move along in **chapter 4** as we are currently studying the very familiar parable of Jesus’ known as, “The Parable of The Soils”. The entire parable is found in **Mark 4:1-20**. By way of review, we saw the first soil described for us by Jesus in **verse 15**. This soil, described as *the wayside* or path was illustrative of the heart that is unresponsive and hard. It is important to note that **verse 15** does not eliminate **verse 9**. Although it is Satan that comes and takes away the seed that was sown in them, Jesus by no means excuses the people in this group as not responsible. They are responsible; for they do nothing with the message. They just let it sit there on their heart and treat it as frivolous. Scripture tells us that *Satan comes immediately* (Greek Eutheos -straightway, immediately, forthwith) and *takes away the word...* This idea is one that anyone who has been near the ocean or a lake where there are seagulls is probably quit familiar with. As soon as you throw some food out on the ground it sets there for only a moment before the birds drop in and take away their snack. This is what takes place with the seed that *fell by the wayside*. Satan and his demon hosts come to the hearer of the gospel and attempt to set before them other objects of affection that would fill their minds with other things in order that their minds would be taken off what they have been hearing. Tragically, all that they have heard and observed and perhaps even begun to contemplate is lost at once and is not thought of any longer. In **Acts 24:25** we find what seems to be an example of this in the life of Felix, who heard Paul yet procrastinated. We now return where we ended up last week, just beginning to discuss the second type of *soil* spoken of in our text as we find it introduced in **verses 5-6** and analyzed in **verses 16-17**. Jesus said that *some fell on stony ground where it did not have much earth...* Again we find that something takes place *immediately*; here in particular, the shallow or *stony ground* hearts receive the word with *gladness*. This is the impulsive hearer if you will. Quickly and suddenly they are “all over it”, they *receive* (Lambano –to take, to take with the hand, lay hold of) the word with gladness. Interestingly, this is the same word which is used to describe those who truly receive Jesus (**John 1:12**). As we will see and even mentioned briefly last week, they are proven to be frauds by their lack of endurance. Read **Hosea 6:4**.

The Word Applied: Do you come before the Word prepared to diligently hear it proclaimed & taught? Do you still receive the Word with gladness or is this ‘Bible thing’ getting old & offensive?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, prepare my heart to always joyfully receive Your Holy Word.

TUESDAY – The *stony ground* heart is said to have *no root or much earth* and this is what proves to be fatal. The heat of the sun comes to the plant that has no ability to reach deep for water and nutrients and scorches it. It can't take the heat and all the harsh realities that come to a growing plant. Similarly, the impulsive, knee-jerk reacting hearer of the word may *immediately receive it with gladness* but they don't last in the heat of the sun either as it exposes the depth and sincerity of the "conversion". Our Lord says that they *endure only for a time* because they have *no root in themselves*. They are totally superficial and yet seeming genuine at the outset. What proves them to be frauds is the *tribulation* and *persecution* that arises *for the words sake*. When attachment and identification to and with the truth produces difficulty, trial, heartache and loss these *stony ground* hearts *stumble* (Skandalizo). Some translations use the word offended here. They are offended and scandalized that following the truth and Jesus would produce hard times and suffering rather than a life of peace and prosperity. Beloved, these false professors make up a huge portion of the so called Christian community. Just turn on the "Christian TV" programs and preachers and you will see them in abundance. The mark of true, genuine believers is that even though the tribulation and difficulties come, they persevere in the faith. If I may say this, quit frankly there are times when it is not a lot of fun being a true believer. We understand that in those tough times Jesus bears us up, we come through them as He gives us joy and the fortitude necessary but that does not rescind or make null and void the suffering and hardships. Outward adherents *to the word* don't last because they have *no root*, they are not genuine believers and they "get out of the kitchen" when things get hot (**1 John 2:19**). Perseverance is the mark of the true child of God and church history from the times of the persecution of the Apostles (**Acts 12:1-3**) up until this very day bears that fact out. Although this short lived discipleship illustrated in the *stony ground* is a tragic reality it is at the very same time a great comfort for us as genuine believers who have seen God bring us through various trials and difficulties still loving Him and desiring Him more and more. Jesus summed up this beloved truth in **John 10:28**. Read it and take heart true Christian.

The Word Applied: Do you look for an exit whenever things begin to get difficult because of truth? When was the last time you stood for Jesus and His truth and it cost you something?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for having me as Your child safe & secure in Your hand. Give me greater boldness to live for You & stand for Jesus & truth in this evil world.

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 4:7** "And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop." **Mark 4:18 - 19** "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." These verses describe and explain for us the third type of soil on which the seed of the word fell. This type of soil illustrating the heart of the hearer of the Word could be labeled a preoccupied or distracted heart. The *thorns grew up and choked* the seed and *it yielded no crop*. These *thorns* are the temporal issues, cares and concerns which take precedence in the heart of individuals over the truth of the gospel and keep one blind and distracted from a healthy meditation,

examination and action concerning the Word of God, their need of it as well as their obedience to it. Notice these three *thorns* which choke the seed as they are described and detailed; the *cares of this world* (anxieties of the age), the *deceitfulness of riches* (riches, wealth, abundance of external possessions, fullness, abundance, plenitude), and the *desires* (desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust) *for other things* (the rest of the things that remain). This is a damning and dangerous triumvirate. Many hearts are consumed with anxiety over worldly affairs including things that are necessary to be thought on and dealt with but this soil is preoccupied to a point of worry and excessive care about things pertaining only to this temporary age. We know the strength and power of the ever “elusive dream” of wealth and *riches* which promises satisfaction and contentment while keeping multitudes in the dark. Mark alone adds the third in the triumvirate when he records Jesus’ words *desires for other things*. This encompasses “the remaining things” or “all the rest” if you will. If we were to describe *riches* as the “elusive dream” this third category could wear the moniker of “The American Dream”. This blanket seemingly covers all other wrong desires which *choke the word*. Interestingly Luke also lists three categories but he uses the word hedone (*pleasures*) to describe this soil. This Greek word is obviously where we get our English word hedonism from; defined as “the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good, and devotion to pleasure as a way of life”. These hearts bent on sensual fulfillments that are yearning for earthly, temporal things find to their horror in the end that these transient “things” just choke the word which carries inherently in it lasting fulfillment and eternal reward. As we consider the third type of soil and the *desires* that *choke the word* we can’t help but be reminded that these are things that not only blind lost souls but also harm and damage the growth of the true believer as well. **Read Psalm 16:11, 1 John 2:15-17.**

*The Word Applied: Think about and write down some practical ways that you can live out the command of Holy Scripture found in **Colossians 3:2**.*

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, Thank You for giving me eyes to see. Help me exemplify to the world around me, that Jesus and His gospel is the greatest joy and highest treasure in all of life.

THURSDAY – The last phrase of **Mark 4:19** is, “...entering in choke the word, and it becomes *unfruitful*.” This language of *becomes unfruitful* may raise some questions that we will address. Does the *word* as it is called here, or *the word of God* (**Luke 8:11**), or *the word of the kingdom* (**Matthew 13:19**) lie at the mercy of the hearer? Is God’s salvation gospel proclamation all powerful or not? Can individuals produce genuine fruit and then *become unfruitful*? Let’s look at some Scriptural facts which help us to answer these questions. First, God’s gospel is all *powerful* (**Romans 1:16**), God and His gospel are at nobody’s mercy as it is God Himself who commands the *light to shine out of darkness* (**2 Corinthians 4:1-6**) and His *counsel shall stand* and He *will do all His pleasure* (**Isaiah 46:10**). Furthermore, God’s Word always accomplishes what He sends it out to do (**Isaiah 55:10-11**). So, what’s the deal with this language *becomes unfruitful*? Remember that Jesus is describing and telling a parable focusing on the *soil*, the *heart* of individuals and their reception of the *word*. The heart that is full, distracted, and

preoccupied has *thorns* grow up in it which *choke* the word. This word in the Greek speaks to a pressing around and a crowding that literally can suffocate. This person who at first *received the word with gladness* and appeared to be growing and producing fruit was so engrossed by the *cares of the world* etc... that any spark of life was suffocated and *choked* out of them. This provides a vivid picture of the condition of many in prosperous and commercial countries such as ours. So much stuff, and so many things, who needs God? Those who seemed to have the promise of much fruit and may even have something there “growing” on their plant in the end, bring no fruit to maturity (**Luke 8:14**). Luke records they have fruit it just never ripens, it is never edible. It is as Jesus says elsewhere, “*bad fruit*”. Read Jesus words about this in **Matthew 7:15-28** noticing the linked ideas in that text. The false possessors and professors had *works* and *fruit*, they were just *bad*.

The Word Applied: Examine yourself whether or not you are bearing real fruit, real obedience that remains to the glory of God. Beware of trying to look like you have fruit for men’s eyes.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, save me from sins deception; selfishness and pride that reside in me. Help me live in selfless obedience & surrender to Christ; bearing real lasting fruit.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – **Mark 4:8, 20** “*But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.*” “*But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.*” These two verses of our Lord’s teaching speak to the *good ground*, the responsive heart stirred to its depths by the great matters of the eternal gospel, and not being choked by worldly cares it receives the seed and proves it’s fertility by obedience which in turn produces genuine, significant, and enduring *fruit*. They hear the message of the word, they reach a genuine, true understanding by God graciously opening their minds and heart *shining in the light of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ* and they go and obediently put into practice what they are taught. This is precisely what Jesus says in many places of Scripture to identify real born again *disciples indeed* (**John 8:31, 15:1-8**). There is however among these true believers differing degrees or amounts of fruitfulness. Not all are equally productive although all are productive. There is a difference in quantity NOT quality. Every truly saved believer bears fruit, they are marked by the Spirit’s power with the singular *fruit of The Spirit* (**Galatians 5:22-23**). This fact of varying degrees of fruitfulness is evidence of the truth of human responsibility, even to those of us who are born again. Scripture is constantly commanding and calling us to greater levels of obedience, sacrifice and love. The genuine *good ground* produces fruit as Luke says with patience (steadfastness, constancy, endurance). This again is contrasted to the *stony ground* by showing the lasting and perseverance or better said preservation of God’s elect. More tomorrow.

The Word Applied: *Take some time to examine your heart and life and see what quality and quantity of Scriptural, Jesus honoring & obeying, Spirit produced fruit you can find.*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank You for bringing me to life and enabling me to bear fruit.*