

Message #47 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"What Kind of Soil Are You?"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about the parable that Jesus gave of the sower of seed. We can find this in Matthew 13, Mark, chapter 4, and Luke, chapter 8. The parable describes the seed being planted in the old fashioned way, not by machine into perfect rows, but by hand, in the sense of broadcasting the seed. The sower of seed in this parable would walk across the field carrying a bag of seed. As he walked all over the field he would reach into his bag of seed and pull out a handful and throw it in a spreading motion, and the seed would fly out into the air and then drop to the soil. The Bible tells us that the seed would fall to the ground and that some of it would fall on good ground and bring forth a good harvest. But it also describes to us that some of the seed would fall in locations where it was difficult or impossible for the seed to grow at all.

As we read this parable we see that there were four locations where the seed would fall. Of course the one location is good soil, and that's where we would want to plant seed. But there were also three other locations that Jesus described where the seed would fall, and where there would be no hope for a harvest. These are the three locations I would like to take a look at today.

The first of these three locations was called the wayside. The word, way, in scripture, is a term which means road. So some of this seed landed by the roadside instead of in the good soil of the field. The Bible describes it as out in the open where the birds could come and eat it up before it could grow. Of course we know that this is common, for many times the word of God is sent out, but there is no one there who will receive it. In this case it's like there are preachers and

teachers who speak the word, but there's no one out there who will take it to heart. The wayside describes a person who doesn't care about the word of God, and that when it comes, they ignore it. They let it fall to the ground and tread on it. They have no respect for it, and they do not receive it for themselves. They may think that it's a nice doctrine, but not something they want for themselves. This is the most common problem with preaching the word of God today. Most people just do not hear it. Or, they hear it, but they don't receive it.

The second location where the seed would fall is described in the Bible as stony ground. Seed can fall on stony ground, and if there's enough surface moisture it will germinate. But seed that lands on top of the ground must put down roots into the soil in order to gather moisture for the surface part of the plant. If the ground is hard and stony the roots cannot reach down deep enough into the soil for the necessary moisture. In times of rain when there is sufficient moisture at ground level, the seed will do very well. But in times of dryness, it is the deep roots that reach down deep into the soil and bring up the moisture for the plant. Surface moisture disappears when the sun shines warm. It evaporates. If the plant cannot send down roots deep enough to find moisture during the dry times, the plant will die.

This is what happens to a lot of people who hear the word of God and receive it at first, but they die out as soon as the dry times come. If the seed, the word of God, is planted in you, and you don't put down a good root system, your born-again spiritual man is not going to live long. When you think about the word of God being living water, you can see that having enough of the water, or shall we say, enough of the word of God, is essential to growing strong as a Christian. And for a new believer, the water of the word is easy to find at church, or especially at revival services, just because there are so many people who love the Lord, and it spreads. A lot of new Christians start here. The attitude and desire for God's word by the mature believers overflows to those around them and people get saved. However, as soon as the new Christian gets away from the church, the burden for finding this water of the word becomes the new believer's responsibility. They must make the effort themselves to read the Bible and to frequent Christian fellowship so that there is sufficient amounts of God's word to enable them to continue in their Christian growth.

Many people accept Jesus Christ when there is a great move of the spirit because of so many like-minded Christians gathering together for the purpose of the gospel. But then these same people go home and set their Bible aside and don't read it. They don't study it. They don't pray and seek God for guidance, and they don't continue to apply the word of God to their lives. In other words, they don't send down roots. And when the first trial comes upon them, they are like the plant that has no root and when the sun shines hot and the overflowing stream of God's word is not plentiful, they wilt. New Christians die off at an exceptional rate because they don't make the effort to make sure they have enough of God's word. Remember, John 8:32 tells us that the truth will set us free. Our faith is established by the word of God. If you don't have much of the word of God, and you don't have much influence from other people who are Godly, then you aren't going to have enough understanding of the things of God to overcome the doubt that Satan will put in your path.

If you think you can become a lone ranger when it comes to religion, think again. Lone rangers are killed every day. It is only those who stick with the word of God and stick with the fellowship of other well established Christians who will have enough faith to dispel the doubt when Satan begins to lie to you. And you might think that when this happens that you will just call on God and he will deliver you. Well, if you call on God, he will deliver you. But first you will have to have enough faith to call on God. If you haven't read your Bible, and you haven't been in fellowship with other well established Christians, then you won't even have enough faith to call on God, or at least not for very long. And what makes you think God is going to answer your call immediately? The trial of your faith is given to every person. So why not you?

Sometimes people think God is supposed to make Satan stop tempting you. But if God always stopped Satan from tempting you, then the war between good and evil would be over immediately for everyone everywhere. But remember, even Jesus was tempted. The Bible tells us that he was tempted in all things just like we are. So if Jesus was tempted, why not you? Besides, the temptation will strengthen you if you resist it, and will weaken you if you give in to it. However, if you eventually repent and resist the devil, then the times of failure will strengthen you for the times ahead when you are tempted again. God doesn't automatically deliver his people at the first moment of trial. If he did, no trial would be of any benefit. But as we see in Hebrews 12:11, trials are not fun, but they are used to chasten us. The word chasten is not the same thing as just being punished. To be chastened means to receive a negative experience in order to be instructed properly. You might have been chastened as a child, but hopefully it was to teach you how to be a better person.

This is what God does to us. He tests us to see if we really do love him as we said we did that night when we said the sinner's prayer. God wants to find out if what we confessed that first day was really the truth or not. People have a tendency to say the sinner's prayer, and confess that they are a sinner, and that they are sorry for their sins, and that they love the righteousness of God and want to be righteous just like him. Well, not every sinner's prayer comes truly from the heart. Some people will say anything just to keep from going to hell. And if you think I'm being a little to harsh, just think of the example of how a man will tell a woman anything, just so he can get close to her. It is a well known fact by woman that men who are interested in them are not always interested in the welfare of the woman, even though they may whisper sweet nothings into their ear for hours at a time.

Well it may surprise you that Jesus is just a little smarter than your average woman, or your average man. When he hears someone tell him that they love him with all their heart, he doesn't just throw open his arms and send them up to the pearly gates. What he does is to welcome their statement, and give words of encouragement, but Jesus Christ doesn't take us as a bride until he has courted us sufficiently to establish whether or not what we claimed during the sinner's prayer is actually and truly what is in our hearts, and that it is in our hearts strong enough that we will never let it go.

In essence, when you say the sinner's prayer, you have just established a courting season. Jesus is the bridegroom and you're the potential bride. He's going to let you be tested to see if your confession of love for him holds true. After awhile, when your emotions have settled down a

little, and the newness of Christianity begins to wear off, God will allow Satan to tempt you, to see if you'll go back to the things of this world instead of holding on to heavenly things. Satan will twist the word of God, trying to destroy your understanding of it, so that you can't comprehend it, and so that you will start doubting whether the word of God is really true after all. If he can convince you that the word of God is not true after all, you will give up on it. If you cease to believe that God's word is true, then you will push it away. This is how people stray from God. God doesn't go away and leave new Christians, new Christians go away and leave God.

So, what can you do? You can put down roots. Deep roots. This means that you can read and study your Bible. And you can fellowship with other well established Christians, and you can listen to men who teach and preach the word of God. And in addition you can pray that God will give you understanding through the guidance of his Holy Spirit. In these ways, your faith will be firm, and you will defeat Satan's attempt to confuse you. However, if you don't continue to seek for more understanding, and you don't continue to fellowship with other mature Christians, then Satan will be successful in establishing doubt within you, and you will be defeated. No, Jesus Christ will never leave you nor forsake you, but when you have stopped fellowshiping with other Christians, and you've stopped reading and studying God's word, and when you no longer listen to the teachers and preachers, you will not have enough truth in you to establish enough faith in God to continue to follow him. He won't turn away and forsake you, but you will lose faith in him and will turn yourself away.

And think of it this way. Compare a new Christian to a tree planting. Let's say you want to plant a new tree. You pick out a place in the yard where you want it, but then you just scrape a little bit of sod off the ground and stick the tree in this shallow hole. But then you don't water it, and you don't fertilize it, and you don't prop it up with wires or ropes to keep it straight. And if no big wind comes along, and you have a lot of gentle rain falling all the time, your new tree might grow fairly well. However, if the wind comes up strong it will blow it over. And if a dry spell comes along and the sun shines especially hot, your little tree will soon wilt and die off. Just like a tree, you need to send down deep roots so that you have a supply of good water when things get tough. Anyone can be a Christian in the easy times, but God doesn't let anyone exist just in easy times. Trials are a part of growing, because it is through the trials that you become strong.

You know, there are a lot of people who repeat the sinner's prayer, but don't have a real heart for God, and don't ever have much to do with God after the first few weeks. And if you're like this, and you start out being on fire for God, but you cool off just as fast, you're going to have a difficult time when you stand before God on judgment day. When you do, you will try to claim that you are a Christian, and God will answer, "Oh, sure, for about 30 days you were a Christian, maybe. But what did you do for the rest of your life?" And you will cry and blubber and try to tell Jesus that the Bible said that he would not give you more than you were able to bear. And he will reply that the verse was certainly true, but that all it proved was that you should have been able to get through the trial he allowed you to have, because all you would have had to do was to read, and study, and listen, and apply the word of God to your life. But you chose to go back to your old way of life, and maybe the football game was more important than God's word. And you certainly never lost faith in the Lions, even though they lost over and over again. But then, why

wouldn't you have a lot of faith in them? You followed their every move and every word. You could quote the player and game statistics better than you could quote Psalms 23 or John 3:16.

And so it continues. But, let's go on to the next part of the sowing of seed. This last type of seed planting that the scriptures describe is seed that falls among thorns, and the thorns rise up and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Of course, we all know that weeds will choke out our good plants. That's why we hoe the weeds or apply weed killer. The Bible plainly uses weeds to denote wicked people and the wickedness they bring forth. Many new born-again people go right back into the same environment they came out of. No, I'm not talking about going back to your family that is unsaved, or returning to your job that you already had, but I'm talking about continuing to have friendships with people who reject the word of God.

When we were first in the world, we loved the things of the world. We made friends with people who liked to do the same things we did. We caroused together, we drank together, we smoked together, we shopped till we dropped together, we went to the same movies with nudity and violence together. But when we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, then it was time to come out from among them and be separate. But many new born-again Christians don't want to separate from the wickedness. When you go back to your old friends and your old friends are offended by your new Christianity, your first tendency is to be offended yourself. Then, you want to save face by trying to hang around with these same people that have rejected Christ. Pretty soon, their lack of good spirit and rejection of the word of God, rubs off on you. Pretty soon, you find yourself all wound up again in movies and football and baseball, and every other sport or hobby you can think of. Then, as the Bible says in Luke 8:14, you become choked by the weeds, meaning that the truth is choked out of you by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. In short, you give up on Jesus Christ and go back to your old life.

In this example, as well as the other examples, you yourself turn away from Jesus Christ, he doesn't turn away from you. You turn away from him because you haven't gained enough of the truth of the Word of God, and therefore you can't dispel Satan's lies anymore. You become convinced that being a Christian is either too hard or not fun enough, or you just plain change your mind that it is actually the truth that you thought it was. Either way, you choose to go away from Jesus. You didn't have the patience to wait until the end of the world and receive your reward because other things in this world were more important. You gave up long before the end. You didn't fight a good fight, and you didn't keep the faith. The faith got away from you, because Satan was able to overcome you with lies. He could do this because you wouldn't keep enough truth coming in daily, but hung around other people that encouraged the lies. You tried to live on crumbs from God and feasts from Satan. And - - - there's an old saying that says, "You are what you eat."

When it comes right down to the bottom line, it is plain to see that Jesus Christ is courting you. He has set a time for the courtship which will allow enough time to see if you are the kind of spouse he's really looking for. The courtship starts because you were willing to answer his call, but the courtship will be over just as soon as God has established that you aren't what you said you were.

Of course, if you really are what you said you were, and if you really do love the righteousness of God, and if you really do want to shun the world and set yourself apart for the will of Jesus Christ, and if you really do apply yourself to fellowship with other Christians and the applying of the word of God, then the courting time will not come to an end, at least not until your time on earth ends. And the Bible tells us in Mark 13:13, that if we can hold out with our faith to the end of our time, then we will be saved.

You see, the courting season with Jesus is just a matter of weeding out the people who confess falsely that they are lovers of righteousness. And God will know what is really in your heart when he sees you not reading your Bible, and not seeking the fellowship of other Christians, and not being willing to separate yourself from your past worldly friends who you allow to drag you further away from the truth. And by the way, don't think that you as a brand new Christian are strong enough to hang around your old friends and try to change them. Remember, you are a new Christian who is not very well versed yet in the ways of Christianity, and therefore you aren't real good at persuading the wicked to repent. But those wicked people you have always run around with have had lots of practice at persuading other people to join them in their wickedness. In fact, you used to help them do just that. If you think you can beat them just by hanging around them and befriending them and trying to sneak a word from God in every once in awhile, then you had better think again. They will chew you up and spit you out. Let someone who has some Christian experience under their belt tackle the problem of winning your old friends to Christ. If your old friends are really friends, they'll come to you on your terms. You don't have to hang around them on their terms. Draw near to trustworthy Christians and concentrate your energies on getting your own life stabilized first. Seek the truth, and when you find more of it, apply it to your life. After all, you claimed that you were a lover of righteousness and hated the evil. This is your chance to try and prove it. Anyway, if you don't, you won't be courting Jesus for too long. If you don't separate yourself from the old life and start concentrating on the new life, pretty soon church will be boring, Christian conversation will be boring, and God's word will be boring. Then you will turn away from Christ and will begin to seek the old fleshly delights you had just shunned 30 days before that.

You know, we always refer to the first month or so of a new Christian's life as the honeymoon period. A honeymoon period is when all is sweetness and light between the bride and bridegroom. But then the first problems crop up, and the moment of truth arrives. It is now time to confront some semi-serious situations, and make your first adjustments to your marriage covenant. This is when a lot of marriages fail. If you are truly committed to your marriage covenant with Jesus Christ, then you will withstand the storm of life. If you truly continue to seek and apply the word of God to your life, and to keep yourself as much as possible away from those who would drag you down, and you continue to shun the earthly things but seek after the heavenly things, heaven can be yours for the taking. It's really up to you. Remember, attaining heaven is simple, but it's not easy. If you're going to fight the spiritual warfare battle, then you're going to have to make up your mind to get tough on yourself. As someone once said, "true Christianity ain't for sissies."