

## Bearing Fruit

Luke 13:6: "And He began telling this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any."

Matthew 21:43: ""Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."

John 15:7-8: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples."

John 15:16: ""You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, ..."

John 12:24: ""Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

*Lord, we do just want to commit this time into Your hands. We are very dependent on You, Lord, both the speaking and the hearing. For You said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." So, Lord, this is Your time, this is Your Word. We pray that You will bless it, and may it go forth and produce the fruit that You want. We ask it in Your precious name. Amen.*

## The Parable of the Sower

What has been on my heart is this matter of bearing fruit. We are going to go to Matthew 13 and look at a very familiar parable, the parable of the sower. I am going to be reading this out of the American Standard Version 1901 from verses 1-23, so bear with me as we go through this. I actually went in, and I changed the thee's and thou's and modernized them. So, if it does not exactly follow the Scriptures on the overhead, you will know why.

Verse 1-23: "On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear.

And the disciples came, and said unto him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By

hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross (become dull), And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not. Hear then ye the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side. And he that was sown upon the rocky places (shallow ground), this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth. And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

As we look at this parable, there are some key words that stand out. "Understand" is one of them, "heart" is one of them, "hear" is one of them, and "fruit" is one of them. These stand out in this parable, but what I really want to do is look at the explanation of the Lord for this parable. And if you notice, the parable that He gave to the crowd sounds a little bit different from the explanation He gives. We will talk about that a little more later.

When you think of sowing, you may have different thoughts about it. But when I read this parable, I thought about when we were up in Vermont. A lot of people up there have gardens, and they go to great efforts with their gardens because deer wander through, wood chucks and other things come through because they want something to eat. So, they have big fences, and they are all wired with electricity, and other kind of things. Really, they do, and if you touch those fences, you will get zapped. When you see them planting, they are planting within a very prepared area, but that is not the way it was at this time in the East. When men sowed, they were living in a village, but they went out into the country to sow because who would sow in rocky places or on a foot path with thorns on it? But that was quite common. So, the people understood what the Lord was saying when He gave them this parable. Now if I heard this, I would say, "Why are you sowing it there?" But they understood this.

### **The Lord Spoke Parables to the Crowds**

I wanted to mention about the Lord speaking parables to the crowds. When you read what the Lord says, it comes across as very hard: "I am speaking to them in parables because they cannot see, they cannot hear, they do not understand, so I am going to give them this gobbledygook. And it made me think of that verse where the Lord said, "Do not throw your pearls among the swine because they just trample over them." And I think, to a degree that is true, that the Lord gave the parables that way. But I really think His heart was that people generally had been hearing the Word of God a long time, but it was not sinking in. Therefore, it was something that came to them and went over their heads. So, the Lord was very smart in dealing with them. He

said, "This is what I will do; I will speak to them in a parable, something out of life that they can relate to that will maybe generate some curiosity, some interest, and they will pursue that, and then come and say, 'What are You really saying?'" It is interesting when the disciples came up to Him and asked Him that: "First of all, why are You speaking parables to them?" One of the other gospels says, "They came up and said, 'Explain to us.'" That is the mercy of the Lord, I believe, in speaking parables to them.

### **What Is Sown?**

He did give the explanation to the disciples of what it was, and notice how different that was from what He said in the parable. When I first read this out of the NASB, it said this:

Verse 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 the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."

That is a lot different from what it says in the ASV: "... This is he that was sown by the way side." There is a difference there. So, when I read that, I was like well that is a conundrum here. What is it? This is saying two different things, and I went to my trusty Wuest, and he agreed with the ASV. So, then I went to Darby, and he agreed with these two versions. Then I went to the Revised Version, and he agreed with this. Lastly, I went to the Rotherham Version, and that agreed with this. This is interesting because most of the modern translations say, "The seed was sown on them" as opposed to them being the ones that are sown. Then I checked out some Greek Scholars. Most of them agreed with the modern versions, but I found this one brother, Charles Ellicott who said this: "Our translators try unsuccessfully to combine the parable with this interpretation. Literally, and far better here and in the following verses, it says, "This man is the seed sown by the way side." So that is what Ellicott said, and he agreed with those versions. And I thought, I want to lean this way, but the best way to interpret the Bible is with itself. Go somewhere else and see if there is something that backs that up. You do not have to go too far forward in chapter 13 to get the answer to that.

Matthew 13:36-38 is the parable of the wheat and the tares. "Then he left the multitudes, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; ..."

Remember, this sower, who is the Son of Man, is the Lord Jesus, and He is sowing good seeds. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, therefore, He is sowing individuals. That is it, Lord, that speaks to me right there. He was actually sowing individuals. Now you may come back and say, "Wait a minute because Luke says that He went out and sowed the Word."

### **Difference of What is Sown in Matthew and Luke**

He said in Luke, "Now the parable is this, the seed is the Word of God." Do we have a contradiction? One is saying this, and one is saying that. I do not think we have a contradiction. Remember Matthew is the gospel about the King, or you could say also, kingdom. He is speaking here about the establishment of the kingdom in Matthew. Luke is different. He is

bringing up another aspect of the truth. And that other aspect of the truth is that the sower, the Lord Jesus, does sow the Word also because why would He sow people that do not first have the Word in them. Because the one in Luke's gospel really has to do with an initial sowing. The sowing that you typically hear as an interpretation, if you go out anywhere and listen to any preacher, he is going to refer this sowing to unbelievers with three quarters of them not responding, and twenty-five percent who do. Actually, one brother, I think it was Phillip Keller who said that he believed there were not more than two percent of Christians in any generation. I thought, two percent! There are two different aspects of the truth between Matthew and Luke.

### **Sowing is for Bearing Fruit unto the Kingdom**

We want to go into this parable a little, but first I do want to emphasize that we find the Lord Jesus has sown us all into a certain environment, into certain circumstances, and why? It is all for the purpose of bearing fruit in the kingdom. That is why He has sown us where we are. There are believers all over the world sown into different places and different environments, all for the purpose of bearing testimony to the kingdom of God, bringing the kingdom of God there, if you will.

Another thing I want to say before we go into this is that it says in all four of these cases of sowing that they all heard the Word. And what is the word mentioned there? It is the word of the kingdom. We will talk a little about that later.

### **Hindrances to Bearing Fruit**

We do see that there is a different reaction in all of these scenarios. And we also see how there is that which prevents the bearing of fruit in three of these scenarios. And in these three areas I believe that we can define them in this way. First, there is the wayside. I have to tell you a little joke here. Back in Montpelier, Vermont, there is a restaurant called the Wayside, and it is actually sitting on the border of Montpelier and Berlin. Half of the restaurant is in one place, and the other half is in the other. But when I was a kid, I was known for being a really picky eater. I hated everything except for hamburgers, French fries, and coleslaw. And my grandfather used to tell me if you do not eat, you are going to fall by the wayside. He did not realize that was where I wanted to fall because now and then our parents would take us to the Wayside, and that is what I would order, hamburger steak, french fries, and coleslaw. When he said that, I thought, "Oh, I wish I could live there."

So here we have these three things, and the Lord describes one as the wayside. When you read about it, you find that it is individuals who do not understand, they do not comprehend, and the devil is able to come and snatch the Word out of their hearts. So, this wayside is really a reference to the devil, and that is one major hindrance to bearing fruit.

Then you come to the rocky places, and that is a reference to the flesh, or you could say the self-life. And lastly, there are the thorns, and the description there speaks to us of the world. So, these are the three hindrances we believers face that will keep us from bearing fruit—the devil, the flesh, and the world. And as believers we have to overcome these three areas, or we will not bear fruit, and God will not be glorified. So, let us look at these three.

## **Some Seeds Fell by the Wayside**

We will begin with the wayside. I am going to read that verse for the wayside in the Wuest Translation.

Matthew 13:19 (Wuest): "It says while everyone is listening and not comprehending, (he does not use the word understand.) the word of the kingdom there comes the pernicious one and snatches away that which is sown in the heart. This man is he who was sown as seed alongside the footpath."

### **The Word of God Is Not Operative in Life**

This man is one that has heard the word of the kingdom, but there is no understanding or comprehending. Why? Why is there no understanding if we hear the Word of God? Why is it that we do not comprehend when we hear the Word of God? I think it is very simple. I think it is because we have not applied it to our lives. We have not taken that word in and applied it to our lives. If you do not do that, and you just come here and listen to me now, or whoever is speaking, and you walk out of here afterwards without really chewing upon it or receiving it in, and saying, "Lord, I want this to be made real in my life." It just kind of floats away sometimes when you walk out the door. And I can say from my experience, that has happened to me. I heard a message, and I walked out the door, not having really wrestled with it. As soon as I got out, it floated away into space, and it was gone. But guess who is there waiting to steal that out of your heart because he comes to steal, kill and destroy.

### **The Devil Snatches Away What Has Been Sown**

It is very interesting that when I thought about the order of these four areas that the Lord spoke to, that the first one had reference to the devil. I would have probably put the flesh first because these three overlap. He points them out as different, but they overlap, and sometimes you can be in a place where you are in all three of them at the same time, when it is drilled down.

I think the devil won here and came up first in the wayside because he is the one from the beginning that has been opposed to the kingdom of God. He wants to create his own kingdom and do away with God's kingdom. He has such a hatred against God that he wants nothing to do with Him or His kingdom. And I think that is why it is here first. It is a very serious issue.

### **Spiritual Understanding**

We find these ones here who do not understand. I tried to think what the definition for spiritual understanding is, and I wrote this down, so just take it for what it is: "For one that has spiritual understanding means that one acknowledges the authority of the Word of God and receives it and applies it into one's life." That is spiritual understanding. If you read Proverbs chapter 2:1-6, it kind of speaks to that.

So, these are ones that do not have understanding, and when I thought of that, the NASB said that they were dull of heart. It made me think of those verses in Hebrews chapter 5, and there is only a couple of things I want to pluck out, but I want to read it in context.

The writer of Hebrews was never identified, and some people say it is this guy or it is that guy who wrote Hebrews. Some say Paul, some say Barnabas, and I thought, "Why did the Lord not identify the author of the book of Hebrews?" Man loves to try to come up with an answer to who that is, but my thought is that He did not identify this author because the book of Hebrews so glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and I do not think the Father wanted to put any other name next to His Son in this letter. Probably it should have been that way in a lot of the letters, but for the book of Hebrews I think that is why we do not know who it is or why he is not identified. I do not even bother to try and guess who it is. When I read it, what is it trying to tell me about the Lord Jesus Christ?

Hebrews 5:11-14: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; (speaking of applying the word) for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

So that is what can happen to us as believers if we are not careful with how we handle the Word of God. The Word of God is very precious, and the reason God gives us this Word is that we would apply it in our lives. He does not just want us to have knowledge, what He is going to do or anything. He wants fruit because with fruit He can be glorified. He can also use the Word to build the kingdom through us. Do you remember what Dana said about the kingdom? He said, "What is the kingdom made up of? It is made up of the King and the "doms."

When I considered this first "wayside," I tried to think of an example out of the Scriptures of somebody that would fit this. Naturally, Judas came to my mind. I think of Judas walking with the Lord all that time and not understanding or comprehending; his heart had not been touched in being right with the Lord Jesus and hearing Him. What an obvious choice! But I did not really want to go into him too much for this reason. There is such a big debate over whether he was ever saved or not, and I am just going to leave that there. We actually talked about that a little bit in our group, and Brother Joe Chu came up with some very interesting things to say about that, and if you want to know what they are, look him up.

### **Abraham As an Example**

I also thought of Abraham, and you might say, Abraham? He is the father of faith; you are going to pick on Abraham? Well, just for one little thing in his life. You remember when God appeared to Abraham.

Acts 7:2-4: This is Stephen speaking before he was stoned, and he gives a light into this situation of when Abraham was called.

"And he said, Brethren and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then

came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.”

Remember this one thing God told him: “When you are to go out, you leave your family, you leave your relatives.” He told him to go out alone to where He was going to show him. But we find that this clan goes together, and it mentions his father (translated ‘old man’ in other versions). I thought that was very interesting, but I saw that in one translation.

### **Abraham Was Not in Full Obedience to God**

If you go back to Genesis 11:31: it says, “And Terah (Hebrew for dad) took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth ...”

It actually says that his father initiated their going out. Wow! God had told Abraham to go out, and the next thing you know his dad has taken over. They are all moving together, and they stop in Haran, although they were not supposed to stop there. And Abraham did not hear from the Lord that whole period of time.

Now you Bible scholars probably could tell me how long that period was. I am not exactly sure, but it was several years, maybe a decade; it was a period of time. Abraham just sat there, and God was silent for that period of time because although Abraham went out, it was not in full obedience to God. That is what the Word tells us. But He comes back, and He speaks to him and says, “Get thee out of the country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house.” He did do that eventually after his father, the ‘old man’ died. The ‘old man’ has to die before we can go forth in full obedience. Isn't that true? (see Romans 6:6.)

So, I thought of Abraham as an example for that. His understanding was stifled, his comprehension was stifled until he went out in obedience, and then we saw him going forth and bearing fruit.

### **We Are Often Oblivious to Our Wayside Condition**

The problem is when one gets into this scenario of the wayside, that often you are oblivious to it; you do not know what is going on. And remember, our brother Daniel spoke about that. When he was talking about the presence of God, he talked about being in a position where you have lost the presence of God, and you do not even know it. That is a sad place to be. So, the question is, if we get into that place, what are we to do? If you are not aware of it, you are not going to do anything, are you? Guess who is going to do something.

If we get into this condition where we are so dull of heart we are not aware of it, our loving heavenly Father knows what to do to bring us back.

David said in Psalm 119:67: “Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe thy word.”

Psalm 119:71: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; That I may learn thy statutes.”

That is how it works sometimes. The Lord has to hit us in the head with a hammer to kind of wake us up if we are in this position. He did that with the church of Laodicea in Revelation. They were totally oblivious to their situation, their condition, and He had to come in to tell them. So, the Lord knows how to pull us out of that situation if that happens.

### **Repent and Return**

Now what do we do on our side when the Lord comes in and we discover that our heart has become hard or has grown cold? The Lord can bring something into our life, and it is troubling you. As a result, you may be saying, “Why am I going through this?” He is bringing you to that point where you begin to understand, but there is something that has to be done on our side. And I thought about this verse in Jeremiah 4:3-4: “For thus saith Jehovah to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ...”

That is the response that we should have if we fall into that condition, and the Lord will begin to wake us up. That is to simply say that you need to repent and return to the Lord. It is all a matter of our heart condition. And I want to read some verses about the heart.

Proverbs 4:23: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life.”

I think this is a prayer (and I believe Brother Kaung encouraged us with this verse) that we should pray it every day.

Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked (hurtful) way in me, ...” I think that is a good thing to pray every day.

### **Others Fell Upon the Rocky Places**

Let us go to the rocky places, and this is speaking of a reference to the flesh or the self-life.

Matthew 13:21-22 (Wuest): “And he who was sown upon the shallow ground where the rock layers were near the surface, this man is the one who hears the word and immediately with joy receives it. And he does not have rootage in himself, but is by nature a temporizer, and the pressure of circumstances having come, and persecution because of the Word, immediately he sees in it that of which he disapproves, and which hinders him from acknowledging its authority.” I think that is a pretty powerful translation.

### **The Flesh**

So, this person, this individual is depicted as having no depth; they are shallow. The word would define such a one as carnal or fleshly. When you think about a person like this, the reason they probably get excited when they hear the Word is maybe it is something that satisfies them more than anything else. They get excited, but it is really only on a surface level.

I can remember as a new believer what kind of led me to the Lord was prophecy, particularly prophecy of the end times. And I used to get so excited about it, reading anything I could on the end time prophecies. The only thing about that is you cannot really grow on that.

Sure, it is exciting to read about and tell others about it, but you do not really grow from that, I do not think so. These individuals are ones that are kind of interested in what the Word says that satisfies them. I think of the prosperity message and the many who are gathered around that message. It is all about what God can do for you and prosper you, and this and that. All I can think about is when tribulation comes to them, how are they going to stand in the midst of it? When all these troubles come to them, and they are thinking: "Wait a minute, I am supposed to prosper and be healthy, and this and that. But all of a sudden, my health is bad, I have lost my job, my kids hate me, my wife will not talk to me, and they stumble." It is a horrible place to be in when you are interested in hearing the Word, but you are not really interested in spiritual growth or change. That should be a red flag to us. The Word says that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And the flesh is going to stop pursuing once it is threatened in any way; It is going to bail out. Self-love and self-preservation are a strong force in our old nature in the flesh. When I thought of an example for this, I considered Mark.

### **Mark as an Example**

Acts 12:25: "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark."

They took Mark out on one of their journeys, but we know what happened in Acts 13:13 which says, "Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem."

It does not say much more than that, but I wonder if Mark was really excited about going on that missionary journey. But then when he got there, maybe it was not exactly what he thought it was. We hear sometimes that missionaries go out, and they are there for a while, and they give up because things get very difficult. Persecution comes in because of the Word, and they say, "This is more than I can handle," and they bail out. That is what the flesh will do—bail out.

Luke 9:61-62: "And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. (Lord, we will follow you, but let me do this first.) But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Looking back made me think of the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt. When they got into the wilderness, things got tough. There was not anything to eat that they wanted, water was scarce, and they started thinking about going back to Egypt. They said, "At least we had this to eat there." They had already forgotten about the hardships in Egypt, and they wanted to go back. When we look back, it speaks of having reluctance or hesitation in following the Lord. That is what it is. So what is the remedy?

### **Bear the Cross**

Luke 14:25-28: "Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever

doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it?"

Such an important thing in the life of a believer is that we count the cost. That says to me we need to get serious before the Lord and say to Him: "Lord, I see what the cost means. This means me; this means my life." And sometimes we sit in that position for a while in certain circumstances because we cannot count the cost. We just cannot go forward, but we have to face that; we have to count the cost to go on with the Lord. We have to bear that cross; it is the only way we can get through.

### **Submissive to the Holy Spirit's Rule and Lead**

So, I find that this one not only needs a heart to receive the Word of the kingdom but to hold on to it even through tribulation and persecution. But we find that the flesh is not capable of this, is it? It is just not capable. I want to read a couple of verses that speak to how we persevere through this.

Galatians 5:24-25: "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified (Past tense, done thing) the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."

We need to remember, as it says in Galatians 5:16-17: "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; (Your flesh and the Holy Spirit will never see eye to eye.) that ye may not do the things that ye would."

Basically, how we persevere practically means being submissive to the Holy Spirit's rule and leading in our lives. It is just as simple as that. It is a very simple thing, but it becomes very difficult sometimes because our flesh wants to satisfy itself. It wants to go its own way. It does not want hardship and trouble, but that is just part of a Christian's life because we have an enemy that wants to stop us in our tracks.

### **Others Fell Upon the Thorns**

Now we come to the thorns which we said is a reference to the world, and I want to read again from Wuest.

Matthew 13:22 (Wuest): "And he who was sown as seed into the midst of the thorns, this is he who hears the Word, and the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of its wealth combine to utterly choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful."

### **Divided Hearts**

We find that those who fall into this category or condition have divided hearts. They have one foot in the kingdom and one foot in the world. They are distracted by the cares, by the worries of the world, and they are deceived by the false sense of the security of riches. It is easy to fall there.

In Luke it says that you can be distracted by other lusts such as power, position, or pleasure. When I considered this, I thought what is an example that speaks of this. I thought about Demas, and it says in Philemon 1:23-24: “Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so, do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers.” Demas was a fellow worker at one time.

Paul writes later in II Timothy 4:10: “For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, ...” The cares of this world, the glamor of the world caught Demas, and Demas said, “No more; I am going back.”

I would like to read this whole portion of Matthew 6:24-34, but it is too long.

Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

But there is such a tendency in us to have things. And when I got that email this morning from Jack, and I saw the condition of what those believers in Pakistan lived in; it was pretty gruesome is the way I would describe it. And I thought, we believers here in America are spoiled. When I thought about those people sharing one bathroom among families, we have a hard time if we have less than two or three bathrooms in our houses.

Matthew 6:32-34: “For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; ...” The whole world is seeking these things, food, drink, pleasures, all these material things that make life so much easier. But what does it say here? “for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” He knows that we need these things.

### **Seek Ye First His Kingdom, and His Righteousness**

“But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

It is so easy for us to get anxious and worry, and I am not going to read the verses in Philippians 4:6-7, which speak of that, but I do want to read this out of Proverbs.

Proverbs 30:7-9: “Two things have I asked of thee; Deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies; Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, And use profanely the name of my God.” That can be a tendency if you get a lot of material goods, and you start to lean on them. These are two conditions that we do not want to be in—too much, way too little: just balance.

### **Others Fell Upon the Good Ground**

There is so much here that is negative, but I wanted to end with something positive. Wuest says in Matthew 13:23 about the good ground: “But he who was sown as seed upon the good ground, this is he who hears the Word and understands it, (That speaks to me of obedience.) who is such a one as bears fruit and produces, in the case of one on the one hand, one hundred

per cent, and in the case of another on the other hand, sixty per cent, and in the case of still another, thirty per cent.”

It is interesting that it says, “hundred, sixty and thirty,” and when I considered that, I thought, I want to produce a hundred percent. Why would I be producing possibly sixty or thirty? It spoke to me of mixture, and that is why it is not a pure hundred percent. So, we have to be careful of that mixture.

### **Honest and Good Hearts**

But Luke says this beyond what is said in Matthew, and I am reading this out of the ASV.

Luke 8:15: “And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

There is your answer right there. They have an honest and good heart because remember it said when the Lord talked about those that He spoke the parables to, He said that they did not understand because of the condition of their hearts; their hearts were not in the right place so there was no understanding there.

Earlier, I talked about this thing called the kingdom of God, the word of the kingdom. What is the word of the kingdom? I think it speaks simply of the sovereign rule of God; that is the word of the kingdom. He is the authority, and we are to come under that. And I thought of this verse, practically speaking, what this means to us as believers.

II Corinthians 5:14-15: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.”

That is coming under the sovereign rule, living for Him, not as unto ourselves. How can we do that? How can you live unto Him?

You remember when Brother Lenny spoke about abiding. I just want to read a couple of verses.

John 15:4-5: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.”

*Lord, we just come back to You and commit this word to You. Lord, our prayer is that we would be those who have honest and good hearts. We would be those that want to go on and follow You even as Caleb did who followed You with all his heart. Lord, in these three areas, we thank You that there is provision in You against the enemy, against the flesh, and against the world. So, Lord, we just commit this word to You and pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

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| Speaker | Sheridan, Steve                                                                                                                   |
| Venue   | Richmond, Virginia, US                                                                                                            |
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