

## THE SATISFIED SOWER!

Mk. 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. <sup>13</sup> And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? <sup>14</sup> The sower soweth the word. <sup>15</sup> And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. <sup>16</sup> And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; <sup>17</sup> And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. <sup>18</sup> And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, <sup>19</sup> And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The ministry of the Lord Jesus had reached an important stage. The multitudes had failed to recognise Him as the Messiah, **Jn. 1:11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not ... As Isaiah had prophesied, **Is. 53:2** He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we [*i.e. the people of Israel*] shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. In Jesus' own words ... **Mk. 4:12** seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

Of course, it was His desire they would accept Him, however, the Saviour also knew the eternal plan of His Father ... that a blindness would impair their spiritual vision, and it would be accompanied with the hardness of heart they inherited from the rebellious generations of their fathers. ... Consequently, they would not accept His claims, for they could not.

Some years later, in Paul's letter to the Church in Rome, he wrote, **Rom. 10:1** *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* ... Paul's longing was the same as the Saviour's for each new town and new area he entered he always had it as his priority to seek out the Jewish synagogue to preach Christ ... *to the Jew first* (Rom. 1:16) ... That was his policy until he arrived in Corinth. In each of the other places, - for example, Philippi (Acts 16), Thessalonika, and Berea (Acts 17), - some believed and some didn't. ... In Corinth, however, he had a particularly difficult ministry, and he felt as if he was achieving absolutely nothing, - it was like sowing seed on the hardest of ground, **Acts 18:5** Paul was pressed [*συνέχω*] in the spirit, and testified [*διαμαρτύρομαι*, *he earnestly and solemnly witnessed, he 'put everything into it!*] to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ [that was his only message]*. <sup>6</sup> And when they opposed [*ἀντιτάσσομαι*, *to range in battle against*] themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And following that momentous decision, Paul primarily became the apostle to the Gentiles. He continued to love His own people, - it remained the deep longing of his heart to see them saved, - but, in the will of God, - his ministry turned specifically to the Gentiles.

And so, with Jesus ... the people had rejected Him, and the consequence of their rejection was that their hearts and minds were closed to the Gospel.

But, the lesson Jesus had for His disciples was that even though there was the hard ground in the Pharisees, and the superficial ground in many of the people, and the “will I or won’t I” type of commitment ... Jesus was teaching His disciples to trust in the promise of the *abundance* of fruit that ultimately would grow, *some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred*. ... On a scale unheard of before! They recognised so easily the significance Christ was explaining to them of the seed falling on the bad ground ... but the seed falling on the good ground and providing such an abundance was so hard for them to comprehend! ... People reject Christ, - that is what they do! ... We see it all around us, - that is the norm ... but then Jesus went on to speak about a spiritual prosperity that would be so overwhelming!

This is a parable for our encouragement. Through Isaiah God promised, [Is. 55:10](#) For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: **11** So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. ... This great truth also lay behind what Jesus was teaching His disciples!

We sow the seed of the Gospel, - like Paul in Corinth ... We see little fruit for our labour, - like Paul ... All we experience for the Gospel seems to be so depressing, - like Paul ... People are not being saved as we expected, - like Paul ... *but*, promises Jesus, there *will*, - in the plan of God, - be a harvest that will exceed all our expectations! Indeed, if we return to Paul in Corinth, we find that after leaving the synagogue he literally moved in next door and started to hold meetings (Acts 18:7). At those meetings, **8** Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue [*a Jew!*], believed on the Lord with all his house [*all Jews*]; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed [*mostly Gentiles*], and were baptized. Yes, some of the seed *had* fallen on hard and unreceptive ground, but in the will of God, much of it had fallen on ground that He had prepared, and it bore fruit in the salvation of many souls, and consequently ... **9** Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: **10** For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. **11** And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

How is it that some are saved and some are not? *Is it to do with the ability of the preacher or the evangelist? ... Well, here is what God's Word says, Rom. 9:15 For he [God]saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy ... 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. ... The salvation of any soul has its origin in the eternal will and plan of God.*

And that is what Jesus was saying to the disciples ... The ground is hard, nobody promised sowing the seeds of the Gospel would be easy! ... "Don't you get what I'm saying?" ... **13 Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? ... Here, I will explain it to you, 14 The sower soweth the word.** That is what the sower is there to do, - that's the job for which he is employed! In fact, that's all Jesus told the disciples about the sower. He didn't tell them the sower's name, or where he came from, or whether he was tall, small, thin, or fat ... He simply told them, **14 The sower soweth the word.**

You see, does it matter whether the sower speaks with an Irish accent, or an English accent, or a Welsh accent ... or even with a Scottish accent?! Of course, it doesn't matter because the sower is simply there to sow, - he is not there to promote himself, - he is simply there to sow, and what he sows is *the word!* ... And it is the Word of God he sows for there is nothing but the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that has the power to save a lost soul ... Paul declared, **I Cor. 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified ... 9:16 for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**

We are not called to sow the seeds from out of the bag of the social worker, or the human rights organisations, or the charities, - no matter how good they are. ... The sower simply **soweth the word** of God in the expectation of it falling on ground the Holy Spirit will have prepared so that a good crop is produced ... and lost sinners won for the Saviour. That is how Paul described it when he wrote to the Thessalonians, **I Thess. 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. ... The power is in the Word, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. ... The seed being sown! ... Acts 4:31 they spake the word of God with boldness ... 6:7 And the word of God increased ... 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John ... Acts 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God ... 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied ... 13:5 And when they**

were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews ... <sup>44</sup> And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. ... The word is the seed ... and it's the sower's duty and obligation to sow it, for through the sowing of the seed, the living Word of God brings life.

So, it's not about the sower, and we daren't tamper with the seed because that has been given to us by God ... and it would be completely missing the point if someone was to say we need to change our style, or the substance of our message ... It is not the style or the substance that enters the ground of the soul that brings growth, it is the good, sound, reliable, God-given seed.

... And Mt. 13:19 uses the soil to illustrate the heart, *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.* ... The real issue is how the seeds sown enter, - or otherwise, - the heart. It is all dependent upon the condition of the heart. It is not about having the best communicating skills, or using a particular evangelistic formula ... You and I can sow seed, but it is God alone who ploughs and prepares the soil of the heart to receive the seed, as Jesus explained, *Jn. 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ... 14:6 no man cometh unto the Father, but by me ... and He re-emphasised it to the point it offended many, Jn. 6:65 no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* ... There is no human ingenuity that can muster a single anxious soul to rise to receive the Gospel ... Whether it is in our meetings, or in the old people's homes, in the ATC or anywhere else ... Look at the kind of spokesman God used to fulfil His purposes in Egypt, - He used *Moses*, who doubted initially the Lord's instructions to him, *Ex. 4:1 behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice ... and the Lord's ability through him, 10 O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.* ... And yet, the Lord used the 'seedlings' that Moses sowed to bring His people out of the land of captivity and into the land of promise. ... You see, it is God that successfully accomplishes the harvest, and He achieves it by preparing the ground to receive His Word ... *some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred ... so that in all things he might have the preeminence (Col. 1:18).*

When a person comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ, it is all of God. You needn't worry whether or not you are dressed right, or you speak with a proper accent, or anything else ... simply think of the humility it takes for someone to walk up and down the rows of prepared soil sowing the seed. ...

It is not beyond any of God's children ... for it is simply sowing the seeds of the Gospel that has been given to you to sow ... and what a joy and privilege when a precious soul is saved, through your faithfulness!

Oh, I'm too good to sow the seed ... I have too much on and I don't have the time ... I'll leave it up to others ... Well, you just do that ... but what do you think Jesus would say to you? ... You think you are too good to sow His seed, - you are too good to maybe embarrass yourself to share His Word with someone who is needing? ... You don't have the time to point a lost soul to the Saviour? ... What does all that say about your eligibility to be a sower?! ... Just imagine the sowers in the field faithfully sowing ... And then imagine others walking about the field, - not sowing, - but hardening the ground so as to make it more difficult for the seeds to grow ... That is what happens. Professing Christians can put obstacles in the way of the Gospel ... please make sure you are not one of them!

We *do* have an influence. People know if we claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus, and they expect more from us. ... A sower sows ... He doesn't go out into the field to waste his time, or to do something else ... He is there to sow the seed. We are Christians, and we ought to be longing for sinners to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

It doesn't happen by creating the right atmosphere, the playing of the right music with the right acoustics ... or people sporting frivolous grins from ear to ear ... Neither is it due to a preacher with a well-rehearsed patter ... Salvation is all of the Lord, - totally, absolutely, completely 100%!

Yes, often when the Word is sown, Satan swoops in and swipes it away, - he steals it as a bird comes and takes the bread you through out in the garden (v.15)! Another time, the seed is simply not able to grow correctly because even if it begins with potential, it very soon wilts and withers ... and it doesn't last (v.16,17). And for those seeds that fall in among the thorns, they have no chance of growing because they will be choked up in no time!

It is not easy being a sower. It requires commitment and perseverance. It is not as easy as scattering seeds haphazardly about you ... I have a nephew in a horticultural college and he is taking his lessons seriously to know how to sow seeds properly. ... Yes, there *is* a skill to it, but the Teacher you and I have is the very best, - He is the Holy Spirit, **Jn. 16:13** He will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he

will shew you things to come. **14** He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

... Yes, every child of God is a sower ... and God expects us to earnestly sow the seeds of the Gospel. In fact, Jesus, on another occasion, used a similar illustration, **Lk. 9:62** No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. ... When you start, you must keep going for it shows evidence of the worker's commitment to the Master. It is like what the Saviour said to His disciples, **Mk. 1:17** Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

There were no interruptions when Jesus was explaining these things about the sower and the seed to His disciples ... they simply listened. Later on, after He had died, was resurrected, and ascended to Heaven the disciples met again in the upper room in Jerusalem. In the days, weeks and months that followed Pentecost, they were taken up with preaching the Gospel ... Peter travelled the countryside sowing the seed of the Good News of salvation, so did James up until he was martyred (Acts 12) ... and John left his beloved homeland to sow the seeds in a foreign land ... Andrew, Philip and the rest of the disciples spread the Word too, as did Paul ... Sometimes the ground proved hard, and there was no fruit produced. Sometimes when the seed was sown it fell in among weeds and produced someone like Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24) ... But there were also times when it fell on good ground and produced such beautiful fruit as Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, Lydia, and Onesimus.

It is God alone that prepares the soil, - it is all in His hands, - but, at the same time, He calls His people to be sowers of the seed ... because the seed is precious to them ... and they prepare themselves to be the best sowers they can possibly be, in the service of their Master. ... Are you sowing? Are you sowing faithfully? Is your whole heart and being in your sowing? ...

Aren't we grateful to God for those He used to sow the seed of the Gospel in our hearts? Some of them are in Glory now, and they have received their crowns ... They have heard their Saviour say, **Mt. 25:21** Well done, *thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful.*

May God graciously also use us in the sowing of the seed, in the salvation of precious souls ... in the expectation of His coming Glory! Amen.