

Privileges and responsibilities in hearing the Gospel (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] I will ask your attention to the chapter that we read as our lesson, the chapter 8 in the Gospel by Luke. And I will ask you to commence with me at the halfway through verse 8 and then verses 9 and 10.

Verse 8, The parable of the sower is at the foundation of our meditation, God willing, this evening.

And I want first of all to mention the opening verses of the chapter.

To him of their substance.

The parable of the kingdom of God.

[3 : 04] A kingdom that didn't terminate when he left time here below and rose to be at the right hand of his father where he now is in heaven.

But my friends, that kingdom is going on. Sinners are being gathered in to the kingdom from generation after generation.

From nation and nation over the face of the earth. And it's a great thing to realize that amidst all the changes that have taken place in the history of the world, the Lord's sovereign work in gathering to himself a people for his praise has continued.

And it will continue until the Lord comes yet again to receive his people into his presence and glory forever.

Now, wonderful condescension in the Lord in his work, in that ministerial work that he exercised among the cities and villages and the various characters.

[4 : 26] And I like that in the second verse. And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.

What characters? What characters? No exaggeration in reference to their former character. But nevertheless, these were the subjects of the gracious ministry of the Lord himself.

And what it would cost him to perfect that which concerned them. And my friends, there's always a connection when gospel grace and truth reaches any character the wonderful transformation from the hopelessness and helplessness of sinners under the bondage of the law of God for the sins they've committed.

And those to whom the Lord comes in his grace, in his love and mercy. Unworthy sinners. Through authority to Allow them to complete.

Let's Psychiatry. I don't desire to exaggerate her condition when I say 70 in the perfect number.

[6 : 13] She must have been a terrible person to know. And yet, the Lord knew her from eternity. The Lord had written her name in the book of life from before the world was.

And the time must come when the devils are overthrown in the heart and life of that dear woman. And the ascending sovereignty of the Lord, the Savior of sinners, is exhibited in the great change of heart, life, attitude and prospect of that dear son.

I'm preaching to sinners tonight. And I'm a sinner preaching to sinners. And I find in my own heart a measure of comfort and encouragement in these extreme cases because each heart knows his own bitterness.

If the Apostle Paul could honestly say unto me who am the least of all saints is this grace given. How much more do we feel we can join hands with him and say we know that Jesus saves sinners of whom we feel to be the cheer.

Now, these women. Well, in those days, women were very second rate, weren't they?

[7 : 46] Really. I mean, they didn't hold high positions. It was the priesthood and the sovereigns and the rulers all seemed to be the male sect.

And now here, the Lord shows again his wonderful embrace of chosen sinners who are to be brought into the exalting experience.

And I put that over in harmony with the exalted character of a sinner saved by grace.

You know, it's better to be poor and be saved than to be rich and be lost.

You can't calculate values properly until we come to the conclusion that to know God in his saving love, grace and power is enrichment that exceeds all other positions and possessions under the sun.

[9 : 10] Oh, my friend, are you looking to the Lord Jesus Christ for that spiritual enrichment that you'll never, never lose?

Mary has chosen that good part which even death itself can't take from her. Death takes so much away, but death cannot take a real religion away from a blood-bought saint.

Well, now let me, after those remarks, just show how wonderfully the Lord gathered together the truth in this.

What do we commonly know as the parable of the sower? You know, the things that identify certain characteristics present before the Lord and the people that were present there are possessed in the church today.

Not all that come into a place of worship go away with the seal of the Spirit that they are God's people.

[10 : 39] And they have the benefit of the means of grace. The sower went out to sow and he sowed good seed.

No question about that with the ministry of the Lord. Good seed. It was holy as it were directed to the advantage of the multitude to whom he was speaking.

But truly, it was a divisive ministry in that it identified between those that had the secret and those who sat under the truth and yet remained ignorant of the necessity of understanding understanding in the truth of the gospel.

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside.

And it was trodden down. And the fowls of the air devoured it. What a situation plainly set before us by the ministry of the Lord himself.

[12 : 16] The disciples asked, did they not, for an explanation of the parable. And we have in Matthew 13 and in Mark 4, as well as here in Luke 8, the repetition in almost the same words as was indicated in the record of the parable of the sower.

And my friends, it's a searching parable. It is something that we need to prayerfully consider.

Where do I stand? Here the Lord is drawing clear lines and some are very solemn that, yes, the seed is sown.

The seed is sown. But the ultimate consequence is fearful to record.

Some fell by the wayside. And it was trodden down. And the fowls of the air devoured it.

[13 : 36] When the Lord began to give the explanation, he sheds light on the meaning of that situation.

What a solemn thing to be under the sound of the truth. And to realize that it's of no lasting benefit to us because the transitory reception of the seed is soon lost to us.

It fell by the wayside and was trodden down. And the fowls of the air devoured it. Soon lost.

Soon lost. What a mercy it is to have an ear to hear and a heart to receive the truth.

What a mercy to be conscious of the possibility of the warning being fulfilled that, yes, we are aware that truth is sown, the good seed is scattered abroad, and yet, as soon as it were, the service is over, then we are exposed to the thieving influences of that which is contrary to our spiritual and eternal good.

[15 : 15] And the text indicates to us, does it not, that it's soon trodden underfoot?

Trodden underfoot. You know, it's a solemn thought that things can so soon come in to hinder the prophet of hearing the word preached.

Yes, it falls upon your ears. You can remember, as it were, in a transitory fashion, the drift of the sermon. And then something comes along and you meet your friends and you're talking about this, that and the other of worldly nature and the fowls descend and the prophet is lost.

What a solemn thing to be such a hero as that. Destitute of any real spiritual advantage by reason of the blessings of the truth as is sown in the faithful ministry or faithful exposition of the word.

And then, my friends, he goes on, does he not, and continues to tell us, those by the wayside are they that hear and then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved.

[17 : 13] The devil, he hates, he hates your spiritual prosperity.

He's out to do anything within his power as the Lord may suffer the activity of evil to bear in upon you and the situation, the condition is lost.

Oh, my friends, what a need there is to be watchful watchful and prayerful relative to the consequence following the gospel privilege of sitting under the sound of the truth as the good seed is sown by a faithful ministry.

then, I must, the sun fell upon a rock and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away because it lacked moisture.

The condition, the condition was not good, it was not right. it was upon a rock. You can just cast your mind to the situation.

[18 : 44] Surely, it's cast upon a rock. Root growth is essential to growth and fruitfulness and there's no condition as it were ready to give promise of fruitfulness because of the underlying condition.

and so we find, do we not, and it soon, as soon as it sprung up it withered away because it lacked moisture.

Nothing that was needful as it were to peace and prosperity is present. A rock doesn't give any indication of the promise of growth and then we have, do we not, the withholding of the moisture which is another essential in the springing forth of the seed in a living and promising way.

And then we have next some fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up with it and choked it. so many things, so many things can bring our minds away from a beneficial meditation and consideration of the word that has been brought to us.

And my friends, do we not need as hearers of the word to be careful and prayerful lest we fall into that condition. Especially in such a day as we are living in when so many things are brought to us by so many channels.

[20 : 53] I thought sometimes of those bygone days when villages were common and a little community was, as it were, growing up together in a certain locality and they hardly knew what was going on in the neighbouring villages and in the town that was close at hand.

It had to be by word of mouth communicated from one to the other. Now in this modern day something can happen in Australia.

There's a terrible fire burning in the state of Victoria and it's hardly doing its damage before the consequences all laid before us through the media and through the press and it captivates our thoughts and it can rob us of higher principles.

Not that we've got to be indifferent to the troubles and trials of others, God forbid, but these days are filling our minds with so much more than was the experience of our forefathers and we've got to be careful that our minds don't fall into absolute subjection to the power and dominion of all this information that's raging about day by day and night by night and we do need in this day a special watchfulness and prayerfulness with regard to this condition that the word shall be choked and we shall lose all benefit of what has been spoken to us.

To be a hearer is a very wonderful privilege to sit under the sound of the truth has got a constructive promising indication attached to it.

[23 : 20] But my friends, let us remember that we need the grace of God to be a good hearer. We need the preserving care of God that we might be saved from over anxiety about temporal things to the total neglect of spiritual things.

We need a balance somewhere between natural concern which is suitable to a believer as well as to an unbeliever but not to be in captivity and bondage to the things of the world as opposed to the things that are heavenly spiritual and eternal.

Now let us just consider as we come on to the last consideration that the Lord spoke of.

Another fell on good ground and sprang up and bear fruit and hundred fold. He spoke of the good way of hearing.

The good way of hearing. I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

[25 : 04] A heart sanctified by the Spirit in answer perhaps to many prayers before entering into the house of God.

Almost before the Sabbath dawns there's a concern tomorrow is the Lord's day. Oh that it may be to me a day of blessing.

Oh that the Lord through his word would speak to my soul and feed me with food convenient for me.

Send out thy light and thy truth oh Lord. Let them lead me. We say it's a natural practice to expect of older people particularly I would not draw an age a line of age in this matter.

It's normal for older people to bow their heads before the service commences. They come into the sanctuary they bow their heads and it's expected but where's their heart while they bow their heads?

[26 : 24] Are you after something? Do you need something? the Lord couples asking with a great promise ask and you shall receive seek and you shall find knock and it shall be open unto you for every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

But my friends if you just come in and for the sake of others observing your activity you close your eyes and bow your head and then you open your eyes and you start anticipating what hymns on the board to be sung as the first hymn this morning or this evening.

You know there's no hunger. Now let me put this aspect to you over against such an attitude. The Lord says does he not blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

There's a constructive and promising truth that encourages us when we come into the house of God to sincerely pray that our souls may be fed that we may be instructed in precept and in promise that the Lord will send us away with something something to nourish and cherish us as we continue in the battle of life.

love. The Lord pronounces a blessing. The Lord prepares the heart.

[28 : 28] The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. Oh what a mercy to come into the house of God with a prepared heart.

with a living desire for spiritual food. Not to be entertained in a religious atmosphere but to be fed with heavenly manner according to the type that God gives to us.

Wherein his children, the children of Israel, were maintained all those years in the wilderness of Sinai.

Well the Lord says, does he not, when he had said these things he cried.

That really took hold of me in my reading. He cried, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Oh my friends, it seems as though the very desire of our Lord for the good of his people, he cried earnest desire that they should find profit as good ground hearers.

[30 : 02] We know that the word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard. Well they were in a carnal state of mind. It didn't profit them, they hadn't got any faith.

What a wonderful thing to be able to say, this is the house of God, and that God's promised to be where his people meet, and he's promised to bless the souls of his waiting people, people, and here it is, the circumstances are right, Lord make me right with him.

Oh make me right with him, give me faith to receive thy word, and as a good ground hearer. And my friends I believe by many means the Lord prepares the ground of his people's spirits to receive the truth that he ordains to be proclaimed in their hearing.

Your heart is prepared for a blessing, and it may be a rough week of circumstance, it may be a trial in the family, it may be a sickness identified in your own person, it may be the activity of a neighbor that is antagonistic to your faith, and to the way you keep the Sabbath day, and where you go to spend your time on a Sunday, all sorts of things, but it's as it were ploughing up the heart, and then the Lord sends his word, and you say well that was just such a word as I needed, that was just right, that just meant my case, and oh I do thank God to be an experienced hearer of the word, receiving the word, not as the word of the minister, not as the word of the hymn, or even the fellowship of the people, but the word the

Lord sends, the good seed, sown into good ground. I make a confession, I've seen, I was going to say thousands of sermons I've listened to in my life, must be, must be thousands, brought up to it, and maintained in it all those years.

[32 : 49] How many, how many stand out as good times of hearing? Now I don't mean to say that's the only time you're prophet, when you have a special hearing, but the influence of the truth upon a heart exercised in the things of God, with faith, active, waiting, and longing for some application to meet your situation and your need.

Oh my friends, what a benefit is it to be under the sound of the truth at all, but it pleases God from time to time to give his distressed people a real blessing, a real blessing.

When you've had a real blessing, you won't easily forget it, and you'll go in the strength of that meat many days, in all probability. A good ground hearer receiving in an honest heart, the pure word of the living God.

God. I must watch the clock, but you know, I, with many of my brethren ministerially, we lament the poverty of our preaching.

We don't need people to tell us, well, preachers today are not what preachers were in years gone by. We feel it.

[34 : 32] And the lack of fruit seems to confirm, as it were, the conviction and condemnation that's associated with relative considerations.

but my friends, the fault is not only in the pulpit. Are the hearers as they were?

Is the spirit of hearing as present and powerful as it was in some generations, past?

I ask you, in affection, consider your hearing. Consider your hearing. Oh, the blessing that can fill a cup to overflowing when the Lord comes out of his place and suits the very word to the case and to the need that has been pressing you to your knees in anxiety, under difficulty or in the keen and cutting temptations of the devil and the antagonistic spirit of a fallen world.

good ground hearers, good ground hearers. You know, I've proved in the ministry, I'm never so glad that the number given to me to speak to here at Attleborough them.

[36 : 25] And they're not common in these days. You need to be humble before God that your numeric condition is as strong as it is because I've seen so many in my long ministry that were well-peopled and not well-peopled by any means today.

The congregation has virtually melted and it's a solemn, truly solemn prevailing condition.

But it's a wonderful thing to be able to come and minister. But what is the fruit of a successful ministry?

first the blade, then the ear, and then the fulcrum in the ear. He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, bringing his sheaves with him.

Some others say, well, where are the sheaves? Where are the sheaves? You see, I would bless God for any blessing that he's condescended to give to any soul through my instrumentality.

[37 : 59] All the praise belongs to him. But my friends, there seems to be much prayer and much labour and little profit.

And really, the success of preaching is the consequence under God's blessing among the hearers.

And I do feel in this way, you and I need to be much in prayer that the Lord will open the windows of heaven, pour out a blessing, that he will sanctify our day-to-day experiences to prepare our hearts for real worship as it were pressed to our knees and come to the house of God in heaviness of soul, wondering where the scene will end.

And the Lord, the gracious interpreter of mysteries, sanctifies the situation by shedding the light of his word upon the situation.

And you know that your temptations are temptations. You know that your circumstances are under the sovereign control of heaven. You know that not a single shaft can hit until the God of love sees fit and you go away not downcast, but uplifted.

[39 : 38] Uplifted. Seems as though you're in a different atmosphere and a different world because the Lord himself drew near and went with them.

In his presence I am happy. In his presence I am secure. in his presence all afflictions. I can easily endure.

No change in circumstance but change in your heart relative to the circumstance because you have the Lord's presence. And you know in the Lord's presence is fullness of joy.

And in his right hand are pleasures forevermore. good ground hearers. Oh my friends, if my little ministry has no other bearing on your spirit I do hope it will lead you to fall on your knees and say Lord make me a good ground hearer.

That will be not only to your personal benefit, that will be to the benefit of the fellowship and that will be above all for the glory of the grace of God in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[41 : 03] Good ground hearers. There are other times and we're warned against the details of those other times but there is such a thing in these days and will be to the end of time as hearts prepared of God, blessed of God and made fit to show forth his praise.

This people have I formed for myself they shall show forth my praise. Now I'm going to make an apology.

I'm not an orderly preacher. you may say well I don't know he says a lot and he's only said a little.

Well if that little is blessed to your soul by the Spirit of God I'm more than rewarded. I'm more than rewarded but I sincerely seek your peace and your prosperity in commending to you a prayerful approach to the privileges of the sanctuary of God that God will send to you his servants and through his servants maybe in due time a pastoral ministry he'll send you a servant to serve him and bring forth the fruits of benefit and blessing on every side.

Amen. Amen.