

The Parable of the Sower (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 0 0] I seek to speak this evening from the parable there in Mark chapter 4 that is normally called the parable of the soil, which I think some of you know I prefer to term the parable of the soils, because it is much more on the differences in the soils that this parable parable is concerned.

Now I come to this parable which we haven't looked at for a long time because of the subject on Thursday evening, both last Thursday and the previous one, as we are coming in the articles of faith that we are examining to the application of redemption, to effectual calling, and we thought of that which is stated in the word and so clearly manifested in the world that many are called, but few are chosen.

And this parable is a perfect setting forth of that, how there are many called, but few chosen. And I believe that if God assists us in our looking at it, it will be of value to us.

And it is such a basic parable to understand. It says concerning it that this is the parable that we are to know.

If this parable is not known, how will other parables be known? Christ says that in verse 13 to those of his hearers, know ye not this parable?

[1 : 5 2] How then will ye know all parables? Well, let us take it up. The Lord is teaching by parables.

Without a parable he spake not to them. Earthly stories with heavenly meanings. There is no better definition than that which some of us were given in our earliest days.

Earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Sometimes those comparisons that are made as here, the comparison of the soil conditions with the hearts of different hearers of the gospel.

Sometimes parables of contrast, whereby there is in the parable something set forth and then there is something completely different, stressed, according to the nature of the gospel, such as that parable of the unjust judge, the woman, the widow woman, importuning that judge, continuing to pray to him about the need that she had, seeking redress, until out of weariness he granted her request.

And we are not those that come to the unjust judge. We are those that come to the judge of all the earth that shall do right. And we are not as a poor woman that is unloved and unknown and unwanted, but as the elect of God, the bride of Christ.

[3 : 2 3] And we are those that are not granted the prayer because he desires to close our mouth, but because he loves to hear us. Indeed, he has caused us to come.

Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Parables of comparison, parables of contrast. Well, here is this comparison of the soils to the hearts of men and women.

The sewer stands for the preachers, the great preacher Christ himself, who sowed the word in the hearts of men, the apostles after him, the ministers of the gospel subsequently, all who are sewers, all that in their conversations and in their witness one to another seek to make known the word of life as they have opportunity.

The great *modus operandi*, the great way of working of God is by the preaching of the gospel, by the verbal communication above everything else of the word of life to poor sinners.

And we are told, then there went out a sower to sow. The sower, verse 14, soweth the word.

[4 : 51] The seed is the word. I just noticed for the first time yesterday in preparation, and read it over in the Greek and also the parallel in Matthew 13.

Likewise, there is nowhere the word seed used in this parable as it's set before us in Matthew and in Mark.

It's strange that we speak of the seed that is sown, but the word seed never occurs. It is always that which is sown. Although the word seed occurs in the passage that we read, the word seed is in verse 26.

That is the word for seed. And in Luke 8, the word seed is used in the parable of the sower there. But I bring it just in passing to you that it is always in the verbal form that the sowing is expressed.

That which was sown. And how that which was sown fell into these different soil conditions. The preacher has the word. The word is to be sown.

[6 : 00] The preacher does not make the message. The preacher is given the message. Just as the farmer is given the seed and he takes the seed and he sows that seed, so the preacher is given the word.

And he has to sow by all waters. He has to sow in all those places where God brings him legitimately to preach the message of the gospel of Christ.

And he has to sow and believe as Paul believed that I have planted a polis watered, but God giveth the increase.

And that God will give that increase. And God will effectuate in the hearts of his elect that word of truth so that it will be a fruitful word.

So there is the sower and there is that which is sown, which is the word. And there are these soils. Four soil conditions. And the first is the wayside.

[7 : 05] Where in the fourth verse it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the wayside. And then there is the stony ground in the fifth verse. Some fell on stony ground where it had not much earth.

And then there is the thorny ground. Some fell among thorns, verse 7. And then there is in verse 8 the good ground.

And these correspond to heart conditions. The wayside upon which that which was sown fell is the heedless heart.

The stony ground sets before us the shallow but unopened heart. The thorny ground, the double hearted hearer.

But it is the good soil that represents the heart that is opened by God's sovereign grace. And where there is that work by the operation of the Spirit of God that is the work of regeneration.

[8 : 08] That makes the new creature in Christ Jesus. What I am saying then is that one to three of these soil conditions, as represented by the wayside, the stony ground, the thorny ground, one to three of these conditions represents that which is not fruitful.

One to three is deficient. One to three is not profitable. Four alone is fruitful. And in his commentary, David Brown on the Gospels, he says, However faithful the preacher, and how pure soever the message, the effect of the preaching of the word, depends upon the hearer's heart.

And when he says that, he doesn't, of course, speak as the Arminian speaks, that it's all up to the hearer to open his heart and to receive the word. But rather he is speaking according to the word and his own conviction that God must give the increase.

God must work. That the heart is made to receive and to be blessed under that preaching. I say to you, because it must be stressed and often isn't stressed.

And it may be that in former times we have had somewhat wrong views of the interpretation of the parable. In consequence, we must stress that these do not represent different sorts of Christians.

[9 : 38] These are not different types of believers. Those that don't really listen, go on. Those who are shallow, those that are worldly, and then those that are godly and deeply concerned to grow in grace.

One to three represents that which never knew grace. in its power and demonstration by the Spirit. These three first soils never produced anything that bore fruit upward.

Although some semblance of fruit was given and some expectation of fruit was conveyed. But there was no real fruit of any sort, in any measure, in any degree.

Neither is there that spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit cannot be shown forth except where the Spirit of God has himself come and wrought righteousness.

Now that is so important. Not different sorts of Christians, although Christians may feel that this is descriptive of them. I don't eliminate that. And that might be good for us if we are searched by this and we are brought to say, well, because of how I received the word, am I a real Christian?

[10 : 59] There will be no loss to any one of us if we are under that exercise. But I stress at the outset, one to three are not Christian in any real sense.

Four alone is the real thing. Where there is that fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold. God's work in the heart.

Regeneration of almighty grace. The prophecy of Jeremiah brought to pass. Jeremiah 24, 7. I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 36, 25. And its fulfillment. From all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you. And a new spirit will I put within you.

Let us take them up in turn briefly. And start with that wayside. Sowing. That represents the heedless heart. Verse 4 and verse 15.

[12 : 03] It came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the wayside. And the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. Verse 15. And these are they by the wayside where the word is sown.

But when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. Here is the beaten track by the edge of the field.

The wind blows. Some of the seed sown onto this track, onto this path. And it's too hard for it to take root.

And it doesn't lie long because the birds descend and they peck at it and they pilfer it and they catch it up and take it away.

And these are they by the wayside where the word is sown. Notice that there is a surface hearing in this case.

[13 : 03] This is not the case of those that do not hear the gospel, who have not heard the gospel. This is the case of those that have heard it. They do hear it, but it makes no difference to them.

This is important to notice. They do hear. They listen. They may listen to many sermons. This represents, I suppose, those that may have come for the greater part of their lives under the sound of gospel preaching.

And yet for all that they hear, there is no lasting impression. There is nothing wrought within. There is no penetration of the seed into their hearts.

They have some impression, but it's only a slight impression. It's no heavier than the seed would lie upon the path. The word is external to them.

They are able in an external fashion to understand it. They may understand it in an external fashion tolerably well. They may even be able to know the preaching that they like to hear, and they may also know the preaching they don't like to hear.

[14 : 19] It may even be that the preaching they like to hear is the sounder preaching than the preaching that others would reject.

They may not reject it as others reject it. They may indeed like to hear it and appreciate it. And yet it is only in a manner of external interest. It lies outside of them.

Never makes any impression. There is no deep involvement. Never any sense of personal conviction of sin. As we saw on Thursday night, the law work is never wrought.

They are never brought to tremble before God for the violation of his holy law. They are never given a foretaste of the day of judgment and their undone and lost condition to make them tremble and seek mercy in the day of grace.

Never do they feel this. Never have they come to this condition. They attend. They enjoy coming. They discern even between the servants.

[15 : 26] And yet it's no more than that. It's no different from the seed that falls upon the path. Then there is not only the hardness and the fact that what is so and remains external and never becomes part of them.

It never passes into the internal realm. But there is satanic opposition. There are the birds. The fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

When they have heard Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. Satan cometh immediately.

As soon as it's sown, as soon as the word is heard, the devil can swoop down as a non-clean bird in order that he might cause them speedily to forget.

their capacity for forgetfulness is incredible in terms of the gospel. If they have felt just any little impression deeper than usual, how quickly it is forgotten, how quickly Satan seems to cast a cloak of forgetfulness over their minds, lest that should be thought upon again and dwelt upon any longer.

[16 : 50] There is that self-righteousness too, and he loves to draw attention to their own case and why do they need to give any concern to the things that they hear because they're better than others and they're no worse than most and there is that feeling and the devil loves to have it so that this isn't for me, yes, it's good for others.

Some of these superficial hearers are very good at fitting the word to somebody else, but they are never themselves brought into that place where they are brought to tremble at the word of God, yet to him will I look, he that feareth my name and trembleth at my word, never have they trembled at the word.

The devil comes and their self-righteousness is there and then he works other distractions. If you thought that you be a godly Christian soul might be used by the devil to distract someone that is hearing and is having a little impression upon them and they no longer think because they're distracted by you or your movement, the yawning perhaps of some, the obvious disinterest of others, they see someone disinterested, the slightest little thing outside and you see their attention is drawn off and they are given by the enemy of souls that thought well it doesn't really matter, he doesn't think it's all that important, why should I think?

Have you come to the end of the service and the preaching, it's made just that little impression upon you and then there is that jest, I don't like the giggling and the jesting, we don't have it as much as we did but we are never to have it, it's no place for it, if that's how we're going to be we'd better leave and go our ways.

A person can be greatly distracted, thinking for a moment of the solemnity and the impression upon them still and all of a sudden they're brought home, there's something said, it's all a jest, it's all light, there's a rivalry perhaps said or it's said in some places, thank God it's not said here but it's so wrong, it's so vicious and it's satanic, it's one of those means that he uses.

[19 : 20] God hath blinded their minds, he has given them over to Satan, the God of this world hath brought a great deception upon them and these are the means he uses oft times.

And the critical spirit that sometimes is there and the exercise person just beginning to feel the dawns of exercise, they hear that criticism of the preacher, now the preacher can be criticised and deserves to be if there is error and falsity or anything that is not right but he is not to be criticised by those who are the members of the church, he is the one that they have called, he is the one that they are committed to, he is the one that they are obliged to pray for and he is if he is a man of God committed to them and praying for them and desirous of their soul good and it's not that there should be that banding of words and if there is a criticism it is to be brought in private and it is to be made open and it's not to be a matter of gossip.

How much evil work does gossip do? How much does a word that is ill thought and ill spoken work the devil's advantage?

I know thanks be to God that no true child of God will be lost because of the deficiencies and the defaults of believers but it doesn't give us warrant to parade our deficiencies and to be those that live continually, carelessly and by default behoves us to take heed how we hear, not only how others hear but how we hear and how we hear will affect others in their hearing and may they not be distracted by the obvious disinterest that we exhibit in our hearing.

So there is the case of Satan coming immediately. Why did the sower sow on the path you say? Well the sower didn't intend to sow on the path.

[21 : 34] The preacher doesn't intend to sow in a heedless heart but he doesn't know the state of the heart. These things are mercifully hid from the preacher. Otherwise he could dismiss those that his heart, he knew their hearts were heedless and would remain heedless no matter how many sermons they heard, they could be dismissed, they could be sent home.

Would that be in some congregations the great majority dismissed? Would it be you dismissed? Oh God grant that there might be that absence of heedlessness in every one of us in this little chapel tonight.

God make it to be so. What of the stony ground? The stony ground, verses 5 and 6, 16 and 17, giving the signification.

Verses 5 and 6, some fell on stony ground where it had not much earth and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched and because it had no root it withered away.

Verses 16 and 17, and these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground who when they have heard the word immediately receive it with gladness 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.

[23 : 08] Here is some soil, some moisture but not much enough to give promise of fruit but it never materializes because when the sun is up when the noonday sun is shining in its strength there is a scorching and because there is no depth of soil there there is no root work and there is a withering away.

Here is the person that seems to respond to the gospel, gives early promise. James Wells of the old Surrey Tabernacle said this is the short and pathetic history of some who are called revival converts, charmed but not changed, much excited not truly converted.

If he said that before the day of the modern 20th century mass evangelism what would he have said today? What assessment would he have made on some of the things that are happening in our contemporary world?

The sort of excitement, the sort of meetings where there is no emphasis on the truth of the gospel whatsoever but everything that is peripheral is enlarged and made important and music is to win away into the thinking and into the affections and to woo and to win until there is some human decision made for Christ.

This is brought before us in this parable. When the sun was up it was scorched and because it had no root it withered away those that hear the word and immediately receive it with gladness.

[24 : 59] At least they are those that have heard the word. In some of these meetings today you would be remarkably favored if you had anything of the word.

But this is the hearing of the word and yet it is the hearing of the word that is not accompanied by regeneration. And yet it makes an influence.

there is a solemn thing that there can be an influence. There can be almost a reproducing of something of spiritual interest. A person can go through the motions.

The early years of my Christian experience were in exclusively Arminian circles as some others here have known to their sad cost.

And it was customary to expect that those that came, whether they be children or young people, would make decisions for Christ. And everything was done to achieve that end and these decisions were made.

[25 : 59] I know of very few cases in which they were not made, just as I know of very few cases where being made in that fashion there was anything of reality, anything that lasted.

It didn't last. They seemed to last. There was the immediate interest because there was some excitement, there was some stirring up, some pressure had been put that made people want to make a response.

They were encouraged to make a response. There were all sorts of influences brought to bear upon them save the one that mattered, the operation of God's mighty irresistible grace to change the heart and renew the will and turn their feet to Zion's hill.

Immediately they received it with gladness, early response, response that oftentimes brought them into church membership, next to no time, baptism and church membership.

So it all experienced that have been sadly instrumental in this system in former days until God delivered me from it, opened my eyes to it. What a system it is, what it brings upon those persons, especially young persons at an impressionable time in their life.

[27 : 17] They are made to make decisions. They think they've made them, nothing happens. Later they repudiate it and they think, well that's, I've tried religion, it's a failure, it doesn't work.

They never had the real thing at all, it's been the counterfeit. Again they've been duped, again they have been brought to that place where they've been under the sound and they've made some response but it's never got any further.

And of course it doesn't last, it doesn't last because they've no root in themselves. There's no planting of the Lord, there's no root downward so there can't be any fruit upward. It endures for a while, it goes on for a time, but then it changes and it changes when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, when it suddenly becomes challenging to be a Christian, when it suddenly becomes a matter where one has to stand up and be counted to be a Christian, where the matter of discipleship truly is to be considered and to be practiced.

Different thing then. And when that comes immediately they're offended, they're stumbled. They didn't think they fall away, that's what happens, they fall away.

And the Arminian circles will give their reason for the falling away. They're all backsliders, that's what they tell us. They're all backsliders.

[28 : 51] Well, there's a great multitude of backsliders, but they're not backsliders from a real experience. They've never known the real experience. and what they haven't known has not been that which has upheld them and kept them, as only sovereign grace can keep.

And they fall away because they have never been truly planted of the Lord. They bear no fruit because they were not chosen and appointed.

so to do. What a condition this is. The bulk of those in these years, probably ten or even more years that I was in these circles, the bulk of those that made profession never went on.

Never went on. Missions, campaigns, beach work, door-to-door work, the bulk of those that were brought to decision never continued.

Of twelve baptized the night I was baptized, I only knew afterwards of one that went on with the Lord, apart from myself. Or that we might be very careful in these matters, lest we put undue pressure, so that immediately there is a receiving, but there's no enduring.

[30 : 28] And in a very real sense and in another setting these words are presented, but they have some bearing on this. The latter, the last estate is worse than the first. These people are ever so hard to reach, to influence in any fashion with the gospel.

They've tried it, it doesn't work. No, it's not that it was tried and found not to work. they never knew the power of it. What of the thorny ground and the double-hearted hearer of verse 7 and verses 18 and 19?

Some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And verses 18 and 19, and these are they which are sown among thorns, such as hear the word, 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.

Here is dirty soil, here is soil that is capable of sustaining growth, but it is weedy and thorny, it looks so promising, at first, but as the seed is sown and the corn rises, the weeds and the thorns rise with it, and they strangle, and they bring the growth of the corn to not.

It becometh unfruitful. It seemed as though there would be an abundant harvest here, but it becometh unfruitful, because there is a choking. 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.

[32 : 14] The effect is the same as the soils one and two that we've looked at. Cause, however, is somewhat different. Here again is a person who hears and seems heedful and responsive, makes a response, makes profession clearly.

Here is that person that goes on for a while until the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, bring the profession to a nearly end.

The cares of this world, oh we've seen this, we've seen this, the cares of this world, there was interest and there was profession, and then there was the changing work situation, or there was the coming of a family, and all that that involved, and there were special difficulties perhaps, moreover, that were added, and the cares of these things, the cares of the world, many of them in themselves legitimate things, they made such a difference, too busy now.

Be very careful when you feel you are now too busy, one service, it will be one service, not two. Can't manage the other one anymore. Can't manage every week to the prayer meeting, which soon becomes never at the prayer meeting.

Cares of this world, when I get this problem solved, you tell yourself, well, I shall be able to do it differently, in the summer I'll be able to come. When this exam is passed, I'll have more time, will you have more time, and even if you have more time, will you have the inclination when it's passed?

[33 : 58] Cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, worldly mindedness. In our last church in Scotland, there were some couples with families, and they were prospering, they were beginning to prosper in their lines of business, beginning to expand, and then they built houses for themselves, and they began to move in a different circle, and the effect of it upon their profession, tremendous effect upon the profession that they made, they became less and less interesting.

They became more and more taken up with getting on, and keeping up with the Joneses, and everything began to change, and the caravans began to come. Now, there's no harm in a caravan if the Lord is first, and the house of God is first, but it's a great snare when it takes you away from the house of God week after week, and weekend after weekend, as I've seen it.

in some of these cases. And everything then became a question of gearing oneself to the new scene, and to the new values, and the things of the Lord began to suffer.

The deceitfulness of riches. Not many can gain advantage and riches, and live godly with it. It is not an easy thing to have, and still to live as though one had not, and still to put the Lord first.

And then the lusts of other things, overwhelming influence of worldly things, whatever these be, these things enter in. Those that would say the lusts of other things are the television set, and only the television set, but it's not the only worldly thing that can create a lust that is to be satisfied, that keeps people glued to it, that means that they can't live without it.

[36 : 06] Can't even come to some services, yes, in some reformed places. Can't come when it's the hour of Dallas or something else, and they're watching week after week, and wanting to see the next fantasy.

And I know people, I could mention names that live like this, and are influenced by these things. Lots of other things entering in, there are other things too.

But whatever they are, they have the same effect. There is a choking of everything that appears to be spiritual. And here is the double-hearted hearer.

He is wanting a bit for God, and he wants to have his bit for Christ. He wants to have a foot in both camps.

He wants to make friends with God and mammon, and you cannot love the world without incurring the enmity of God, for the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

[37 : 12] Now you say, can this apply to those that are real Christians? Because we've all seen this sort of thing, worldliness.

What a grip it can get. Some years can pass, and these things get in. And they choke, and they strangle, profession of spirituality.

The great question comes to my mind, and I'm sure it comes to your mind, minds in these cases. Is there a work of grace begun at all? Because if there was, would this take place?

Would this take place? Well, time will tell. God will show that if it is but a backsliding, if it is but a temporary thing, then they will be brought to repent of it, and to turn from these things, and put the Lord first again.

But so often it is, when you see these things, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, that there's nothing there in the beginning.

[38 : 16] It's been a profession, and that profession's so apparently genuine, so apparently full of promise, but it's become unfruitful, never realizes the promise.

I suppose 20 years ministry here, I worked it out two or three years ago, I shall have to bring it up to date. I've received over 50 into membership at Salem, it's a remarkably large number in strict Baptist circles.

Yet, where are these today? There have been those that have moved providentially away. One recognizes God's leading and hand in this.

presence. And there have been those that have been called to the Lord's immediate presence. We much miss them. And yet we know they're in a better state, and we look forward to that day when we shall join them in the state of glory.

Where are the others? Without perhaps the presumption of some in a past day, have those that have left for these other reasons prospered in things of God, things spiritually?

[39 : 36] I wonder. Maybe you can answer the question. Maybe your knowledge is greater than my knowledge. Has it been a mere profession?

No more. And so we come to the good soil in verse 8 and in verse 20.

Other fell on good ground and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased and brought forth some thirty and some sixty and some a hundredfold. Verse 20.

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 a hundred.

This is God's work now. This is not man's work. This is not God and man or man and God. This is all God's work from first to last. And he prepares the heart.

[40 : 39] He gives that heart as he gave Lydia the opening of heart so that she attended unto the things that were spoken unto it by Paul. This is God's sovereign work.

Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened. And only where this takes place can there be that fruitfulness and there will be fruitfulness and there will be that fruitfulness that evidences the planting of the Lord.

That this is a tree of righteousness planted of God. Ye have not chosen me. The Lord said, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.

How does the good soil show by fruit? Some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold. How does the true Christian show by his fruitfulness?

And those who are fruitful are those that hear the word? Luke 8, 15 adds, In an honest and a good heart they hear the word. That's the difference from the previous conditions.

[41 : 49] They also heard the word, but it came to nothing. But they hear the word in an honest and a good heart, which is the preparation of God by grace. And they receive it.

They receive it. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And there is a receiving of that word. And there is a receiving of Christ. And to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe upon his name.

They are not born of the will of man, not born of blood, not born of the flesh, but they're born of God. They're saved by almighty grace. They are those then that hear the word in an honest and a good heart.

And they receive it. Matthew adds, and understandeth it. That is, there is a hearing. And this is the sense of that verb that is used. A hearing and an obedience brought.

It is that hearing to profit. It is that hearing mingled with faith. There is that hearing that issues in the works of faith. They hear the word in an honest and a good heart.

[43 : 00] They receive it. They understand it. And they bring forth fruit. They're not all fruitful to the same degree or to the same measure, but there is fruit in every case.

By their fruits, ye shall know them. And then in Luke 8, 15, we're also told there is a patience. They endure. They bear fruit with patience.

There is an endurance. They continue despite the oppositions. They have the cares of the world. They may know the deceitfulness of riches.

They may know something of the temptation of the loss of other things entering in. They know all these influences, but the difference is that there is a persevering. And God enables them.

And God upholds them. And they go on. And the righteous are tried every step of the way. And I'm more tried now than I was tried 35 years ago at the beginning. But thanks be to God, thus far there has been persevering, grace given.

[44 : 00] And I trust it will never be removed. If it is removed, we fall to the ground. We are as a stick, says Manton in a man's hand. If he take away his hand, the stick falls down to the ground.

Or that we might never have the Lord's hand relaxed upon us. For if it is relaxed, we will be lost. But they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

And he won't let them go, that's for sure. And that's how they persevere, and that's how they go on. And some of those that we think will never go on are the ones that go on.

And some that seem to be all so promising are those that never make anything. They come to naught. And I think in the last analysis alone, God knows the secret of the hearts of men, and they are thankfully not brought to be under the judgment of mere men as to the eternal state.

But I think in these cases they were merely in profession, never in the possession of saving grace. Well, here is a parable. How we need to heed it.

[45 : 11] He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Or then that we might have an ear to hear, if any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

How is it with our hearts? We hear the word, take heed then, how ye hear? What is this word to us?

Have we received it? Do we understand it? Are we those that act upon it? How can a man have received the word if he never acts upon it? If in his heart he believes, but he makes never confession of salvation, if he never comes and joins himself to the gospel church, how can we say that that man has received the word in an honest and good heart of the Lord's preparing?

I think you see gospel ordinances are often misunderstood in this respect, that they are not only laid upon the Lord's people, they are the evidences that those that receive them are the Lord's people.

Where there is no receiving of them, why not? Have you heard the word?

[46 : 29] Have you received it? Faith has been granted to you, you've embraced the word. The gospel is worthy of all acceptance. And that word acceptance means a glad receiving, that's it literally.

It's been a glad receiving, as the gospel blessed you, enlarging your mind. The drugs and the opiates of men would blow the mind, but the gospel gives sanity to the mind.

It gives true knowledge to the mind. Have you had your heart warm to Christ so that you love him, and the constraint of love motivates you in all that you do?

We're under that constraining influence of love to the precepts of the Lord. Are you those that would walk in a different way to that which once you walked in to please the Lord?

As a young believer, we were told, can you be found in this place or that, the picture house, the dance hall? What if Christ should come and find you there?

[47 : 35] Today that doesn't seem to be a great deterrent on many believers. They don't seem to worry very much where they go or what they do or the company they mix in and the places they attend.

But it ought to. Has there been that hearing and that receiving in an honest heart?

Has there been that understanding? Has there been that fruitfulness? This is the fruitfulness. To be fruitful in love and joy and peace and all the other ninefold manifestations of a work of grace.

To be those that bear the marks of grace. I spoke this afternoon at Chichester on the marks of grace. What do we know of marks of grace? I say it to my heart.

I say it to you as he that has ears to hear. Let him hear. Oh, that our word, the word that we handle, the word that we hear, might be not a word that is external to us.

[48 : 41] The old writer says of many a preacher that he never tastes the dishes he prepares for others. I ask myself, has the word blessed me? It will never do much good to you if it hasn't blessed me.

And sometimes if I seem to come with that which is obviously affecting me and I speak and sometimes afterwards wish I had not spoken so personally and so emphatically in certain things, you can be sure of this, that it's something which has greatly influenced me in my own soul and in the secret place that I bring before you in this fashion.

Or it would never be said thus. We want that word that it finds a lodging place, that it affects us, that it moves us, that it inclines us, and that it establishes us and sanctifies us, that we might endure and keep going until we come to glory, and that there might be fruit found as the Lord find fruit, dear friend, in you, in your life this night.

Some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold. I care not whether it be a little fruit, it will be a little fruit in my life in comparison to the fruitfulness of others, but oh that there might be some fruit found as a token that there has been a work done of God's sovereign grace.

From me thy fruit is found. We pray that the hymn writer, Father of mercies, we have need of thy preparing grace.

[50 : 12] Let the same hand that gives the seed provide a fruitful place. May your heart be a fruitful place. And may the evidences of that fruitfulness show forth and endure to the glory and praise of the grace of God all through your journey until you go to the heavenly place.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You shall then hear. God bless his word to us. Amen.