**Research on: Parable of the Sower and the Seed**

**Luke 8:5-8 (to 1st.), 11-15**

“St Mark ([Mark 4:3](http://biblehub.com/mark/4-3.htm)) preserves for us the graphic detail that Jesus prefaced this new method of teaching by the one emphatic word *“Hearken!”* as though to prepare them for something unusual and memorable” (Cambridge Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

The only quality Jesus required of his followers was ‘receptivity.’ He didn’t care if they were women or men, rich or poor, black or white, Jews or something else, IF they were receptive. This parable brings out the importance of the quality of receptivity, both to the speaker and to the listener. The verb “to hear” is used seven times.

“This parable may be entitled, The Effect of the Word Dependent on the State of the Heart” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

This is the most concentrated discussion of listening or hearing in the New Testament.

According to Mark’s account (chapter four), the setting is by the Galilean Sea.

“The word "parable" is derived from a Greek word signifying "to compare together," and denotes a similitude taken from a natural object to illustrate a spiritual or moral subject. It is a narrative of some fictitious or real event, in order to illustrate more clearly some truth that the speaker wished to communicate” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

“A sower went forth to sow - The image here is taken from an employment known to all people, and therefore intelligible to all.

“Nor can there be a more striking illustration of preaching the gospel than placing the seed in the ground, to spring up hereafter and bear fruit.

“Sower - One who sows or scatters seed - a farmer” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com)

“And, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; on the road, which was by the side of the field, in which people commonly walked, and so was beaten hard, and the seed lay upon it, and was not received; which designs such hearers of the word, as are not susceptive of it, do not take it in, and have no manner of understanding of it.

And it was trodden down; by every one that passed by, as the Gospel preached to such hardened and ignorant hearers, is despised and trampled under foot by them.

And the fowls of the air devoured it; who generally flock about places where seed is sowing; and here intend the devil and his angels, that have their dwelling in the air; and frequent places of public worship to hinder the usefulness of the ministry of the word, as much as in them lies” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

“And some fell upon a rock,.... Which the other Gospels call "stony places", and "stony ground"; by which are meant such hearers whose hearts are, hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and continue so notwithstanding the preaching of the word unto them.

“And as soon as it sprung up; . . . "because it had no depth of earth"; only a small crust, or shell of earth over the rock; and signifies, that these hearers had only a superficial knowledge of the word, and hastily made a profession of it, which soon came to nothing:

“it withered away, because it lacked moisture; . . . "when the sun was up, it was scorched"; meaning tribulation and persecution, the grace of God being wanting to support under fiery trials: the reason given in Matthew and Mark why it withered, is,

“because it had no root;” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

“Among thorns - That is, in a part of the field where the thorns and shrubs had been imperfectly cleared away and not destroyed. They grew with the grain, crowded it, shaded it, exhausted the earth, and thus choked it” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“Thorny ground” – “At the moment that ground would look good enough. It is easy to make a garden look clean by simply turning over the soil. But if the weeds have been allowed to seed the seeds are still there in the earth and it is proverbial that one year’s seeds make seven years’ weeds. So in that ground the seeds of the weeds were still there; the weeds always grow more strongly than the good seeds; and there was only one possible result – the good seed had the life choked out of it” (Barclay 19).

“ And some fell among thorns. "Every one who has been in Palestine must have been struck with the number of thorny shrubs and plants that abound there. The traveler finds them in his path, go where he may. Many of them are small, but some grow as high as a man's head. The rabbinical writers say that there are no less than twenty-two words in the Hebrew Bible denoting thorny and prickly plants" (Pulpit Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

Good ground is the fertile and rich soil. “It was receptive enough to take the seed in; it had depth to allow the seed to let down its roots and draw the nourishment and the moisture it needed; it was clean enough to give the seed an unhindered chance to grow” (Barclay 19).

“and sprang up, and bare fruit, an hundred fold; or, "a hundred for one", as the Syriac version renders it; a hundred grains for one that was sown” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“An hundred-fold ... - That is, a hundred, sixty, or thirty "grains" for each one that was sowed an increase by no means uncommon. Some grains of wheat will produce twelve or fifteen hundred grains. The usual proportion on a field sown, however, is not more than twenty, fifty, or sixty bushels for one” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

**This parable is one of the few for which Jesus actually gives his listeners “the key” or spiritual interpretation.**

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

What the seed does in the ground is the same as what the word of God does in thought. Our mental condition determines the fruitage of the word.

12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

The first group of listeners never really receives the word. The devil takes it away. “Devil” in Greek is *diabolos* and it means, “accuser, calumniator (slanderer)” (Strong #1228). “His mind is shut and the truth cannot gain entry. There is mental arrogance – the man who thinks he knows everything already and that he has nothing left to learn” (Barclay 20-21). The word makes no impression.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

“Rocky ground” – “This stands for those whose faith is shallow” (Barclay 21). According to The New English Bible (verse 13), “they are believers for a while, but in the time of testing they desert.”

“Jesus explains this as denoting those who hear the gospel; who are caught with it as something new or pleasing; who profess themselves greatly delighted with it, and who are full of zeal for it. Yet they have no root in themselves. Their hearts are not changed. They are not really attached to the gospel; and when they are tried, and persecution comes, they fall—as the rootless grain withers before the scorching rays of the noon-day sun” (Barnes 63-64).

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

“These represent cares, anxieties, and the deceitful lure of riches, or the way in which a desire to be rich deceives us. They take the time and attention. They do not leave opportunity to think and examine the state of the soul. Besides riches allure, and promise what they do not yield. They promise to make us happy, but when gained, they don’t do it. The desire to possess more wealth brings with it every temptation to be dishonest, to cheat, to take advantage of others, to oppress others. Every evil passion is therefore cherished by the love of gain, and it is no wonder that the word is choked” (Barnes 64).

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The good ground represents “those whose hearts are prepared by grace to receive it honestly, and to give it full opportunity to grow. In a rich and mellow soil – in a heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties . . . the gospel takes deep root, and grows; it has full room, and then and there only shows what it is” (Barnes 64).

“The seed of Christian Science, which when sown was ‘the least of all seeds,’ has sprung up, borne fruit, and the birds of the air, the uplifted desires of the human heart, have lodged in its branches” (*Mis*. 356:16).

“The seeds of Truth fall by the wayside, on artless listeners. They fall on stony ground and shallow soil. The fowls of the air pick them up. Much of what has been sown has withered away, but what remaineth has fallen into the good and honest hearts and is bearing fruit” (*Mis*. 357:13).

**Sources**:

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