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# Parable: Types of Hearts

By Bryan Hodge

Purer in heart, O God, help me to be; May I devote my life wholly to Thee; Watch Thou my wayward feet, Guide me with counsel sweet; Purer in heart, help me to be.

Purer in heart, O God, help me to be; Teach me to do Thy will most lovingly; Be Thou my Friend and Guide, Let me with Thee abide; Purer in heart, help me to be.

Purer in heart, O God, help me to be; That I Thy holy face one day may see; Keep me from secret sin, Reign Thou my soul within; Purer in heart, help me to be." ~Mrs. A.L. Davison

"Is thy heart right with God, washed in the crimson flood, cleansed and made holy, humble and lowly, right in the sight of God" ~ E.A. Hoffman

Let us consider two parables, which we will classify as "types of hearts" parables.

## **The Four Soils (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)**

The setting (Matthew 13:1-2): Jesus is teaching from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. A great multitude are standing on the shore listening. He presents a series of parables concerning the coming kingdom. Two have to do with the heart [The Four Soils (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23) and The Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)]. Two have to do with the value of The Kingdom [The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44) and The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)]. Two concern the influence and growth of the kingdom [The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32) and The Leaven (Matthew 13:33)]. Two concern the great parting to come [The Wheat and The Tares (Matthew 13:24-30) and The Dragnet (Matthew 13:47-50)].

The Parable (Matthew 13:3-9): A sower sowed seed. (1) Some of the seed fell on hard, trodden ground. It did not penetrate the soil. The birds of the air devoured it before it could. (2) Some fell on shallow stony soil. The seed germinated quickly. The lack of depth allowed the soil to warm quickly. However, the lack of depth also meant that no deep root system developed. It would not survive the heat and dry of the summer. (3) Some fell among thorns. It grew but was hindered from full fruit bearing potential by the competition. (4) Some fell on good ground. This seed was fruitful to varying degrees - "Some (yielded) a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty."

The application (Matthew 13:18-23): The seed represents the word of God (Luke 8:11). The four soils represent four types of hearts. (1) Some are hard-hearted. They do not allow the word to

penetrate their hearts. Wicked influences (friends, family, etc.) remove any potential influence of the word. (2) Some are shallow. Due to their shallowness, they receive the word quickly without thinking things through and weighing the cost (cf. Luke 14:27-33). They receive the word, but only shallowly. When difficult times come (external opposition and persecution or internal trials or church problems), they do not have enough depth of commitment and character to endure (cf. Luke 9:62; Acts 14:22). (3) Some receive the word with a divided heart and competing interests (cf. Matthew 6:24). The kingdom means something to them. So does material things. They are "choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity." (Luke 8:14). (4) Some receive the word and are fruitful with varying degrees (Matthew 13:23), and are fruitful with endurance (Luke 8:15).

The sower's responsibility is to sow. There would be no crop without the sowing of seed. Note- This parable takes a great burden off the teacher. He is not burdened with converting every one. He is simple to sow the seed.

There are different types of soils. Not all will receive the word, as they should. Some will not receive it at all. However, some will. When the word contacts the right kind of heart, the word will be received, and a fruitful Christian produced. Note - the issue was not in the message, but in the heart. The message was the same in all cases. Sometimes people think, "If my friend had the right teacher he would be converted." Sometimes the issue is not the teacher, but the hearer's heart. If truth is presented, understood, but not favorably responded to by the hearer, then the issue is with the hearer. Nineveh positively responded to even the preaching of Jonah, a preacher who hated them.

Perhaps, you wonder if the soil is responsible for its condition. Earthly soil is not. However, man is absolutely responsible for the type of heart he has (2 Chronicles 30:18-19; Ezekiel 18:30-33; James 4:8). The answer is: Yes in this parable, the soil is responsible for its condition.

The Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)

The setting (Mark 4:1-2): It is the same as the previous parable.

The parable (Mark 4:26-29): A sower sowed seed. He went to sleep and woke up. Time passed. Growth came, first a blade, then the head, then the grain.

The application: Growth may take place even when we are not watching. The seed may be working in the heart even in our absence. Eldred Echols writes, "The principle lesson seems to be abundantly clear. We should perform our assigned job - sharing our faith - and leave the process of growth to God" (Discovering The Pearl of Great Price, p. 133), cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6.

Jason Jackson tells this story - "When I was a boy I had a friend whose father was a farmer. We would play and work on the farm. We rode tractors and planted vegetable seed and seedlings. We picked peppers, topped onions, and hunted down a few varmints along the way. I had a picture in my mind of how the farm looked twenty-five years ago. Today, things look different. The little trees are now a large, fruitful orchard.

"Watch a tree, day after day, and you will observe no measurable growth. However, it is growing. It takes the right environment - soil, water, and sun. Moreover, it takes time.

"What if we dedicated ourselves to growth today? We sit down and read from the Bible, but tomorrow, we fall into sin - defeated again, no apparent growth. Nevertheless, over time, if we remain

in the right context - the soil, water, and sun of God's love - we will experience measurable sustained growth. We will be blessed and so will others" (Stronger Than Ever, p. 94-95).