

The Good Soil

In Luke chapter 8, Jesus tells the parable of the sower, or also known as the parable of the soils. Matthew 13:23 says, *“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundred fold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”*

There are four different kinds of soil in this parable: soil beside the road, rocky soil, soil with thorns, and good soil. In each of Jesus' illustrations about the first three soils, the person heard and did not understand. Jesus said that only the last soil hears and understands. It is only the last soil that demonstrates true faith since it produces a lot of fruit. It would appear that the first three examples are Christians who have fallen away. But Jesus also implies that the first three never understood. Only the last soil type or person heard **and** understood.

This may lead us to ask, “What happens if someone does not understand?” If we take a look at the parable in the other two gospel accounts it is clear that God is not basing salvation on the hearer's intellect and whether or not he/she can understand the word. By reading the other two Gospel accounts we can better understand. Mark 4:20 says, *“But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”* This account states that hearing and accepting are the prerequisites to being “good soil.” Luke 8:15 says, *“But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”* We see in this account that those who hear the word with a good heart and desire to keep it are the ones categorized as good soil.

Christianity requires three things: a sower, good seed (or the word of God), and an honest hearer. All hearers are not equal in faithfulness. But we are not to take it that the diversity is limited to the three rates or proportions specified. Of the four hearts Jesus describes, the first one hears, but heeds nothing; the second one is affected by external influences; the third heeds, but is choked by internal influences; the fourth heeds and holds fast until the harvest.

For the elders,
Tony Williams