

This is a portion of a larger book. In this version, the Bible texts have been modified into modern English, the punctuation improved, headings and emphasis may have been added, and some sentences realigned.

Chap. 2 – part 1

“The Sower Went Forth to Sow” (Part One)

The Sower and the Seed

By the parable of the sower, Christ illustrates the things of the kingdom of heaven, and the work of the great Husbandman for His people. Like a sower in the field, He came to scatter the heavenly grain of truth. And His parable teaching itself was the seed with which the most precious truths of His grace were sown.

Because of its simplicity the parable of the sower has not been valued as it should be. From the natural seed cast into the soil, Christ desires to lead our minds to the gospel seed, the sowing of which results in bringing man back to his loyalty to God. He who gave the parable of the tiny seed is the Sovereign of heaven, and the same laws that govern earthly seed sowing govern the sowing of the seeds of truth.

By the Sea of Galilee a company had gathered to see and hear Jesus -- an eager, expectant throng. The sick were there, lying on their mats, waiting to present their cases before Him. It was Christ's God-given right to heal the woes of a sinful race, and He now rebuked disease, and diffused around Him life and health and peace.

As the crowd continued to increase, the people pressed close about Christ until there was no room to receive them. Then, speaking a word to the men in their fishing boats, He stepped into the boat that was waiting to take Him across the lake, and bidding His disciples push off a little from the land, He spoke to the multitude upon the shore.

Beside the sea lay the beautiful plain of Gennesaret, beyond rose the hills, and upon hillside and plain both sowers and reapers were busy, the one casting seed and the other harvesting the early grain. Looking upon the scene, Christ said --

“Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the *wayside*, and the birds came and devoured them” (R.V.); “some fell upon *stony*

places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell *among thorns*; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into *good ground*, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

Christ's mission was not understood by the people of His time.
The manner of His coming was not in accordance with their expectations.

The LORD Jesus was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. Its imposing services were of divine appointment. They were designed to teach the people that at the time appointed One would come to whom those ceremonies pointed. But the Jews had exalted the forms and ceremonies and had lost sight of their object.

The traditions, maxims, and enactments of men hid from them the lessons which God intended to convey. These maxims and traditions became an obstacle to their understanding and practice of true religion. And when the Reality came, in the person of Christ, they did not recognize in Him the fulfillment of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. They rejected the antitype, and clung to their types and useless ceremonies. The Son of God had come, but they continued to ask for a sign. The message, “Repent you; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” they answered by demands for a miracle. Matthew 3:2.

The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to them because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms. This expectation Christ answered in the parable of the sower. Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men.

“He that sows the good seed is the Son of man.” Matthew 13:37. Christ had come, not as a king, but as a sower; not for the overthrow of kingdoms, but for the scattering of seed; not to point His followers to earthly triumphs and national greatness, but to a harvest to be gathered after patient toil and through losses and disappointments.

The Pharisees [the church leaders] perceived the meaning of Christ's parable, but to them its lesson was unwelcome. They affected not to understand it. To the multitude it involved in still greater mystery the purpose of the new teacher, whose words had so strangely moved their hearts and so bitterly disappointed their

ambitions. The disciples themselves had not understood the parable, but their interest was awakened. They came to Jesus privately and asked for an explanation. This was the desire which Christ wished to arouse, that He might give them more definite instruction. He explained the parable to them, as He will make plain His word to all who seek Him in sincerity of heart.

Those who study the word of God with hearts open to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will not remain in darkness as to the meaning of the word.

“If any man wills to do His will,” Christ said, “he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself.” John 7:17, R.V. All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path.

“The sower went forth to sow” (R.V.). In the East the state of affairs was so unsettled, and there was so great danger from violence that the people dwelt chiefly in walled towns, and the husbandmen went forth daily to their labor outside the walls. So Christ, the heavenly Sower, went forth to sow. He left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth, a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost.

His servants in like manner must go forth to sow.

When called to become a sower of the seed of truth, Abraham was bidden, “Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.” Genesis 12:1. “And he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Hebrews 11:8. So to the apostle Paul, praying in the temple at Jerusalem, came the message from God, “Depart; for I will send you far hence to the Gentiles.” Acts 22:21. So those who are called to unite with Christ must leave all, in order to follow Him. Old associations must be broken up, plans of life relinquished, earthly hopes surrendered. In toil and tears, in solitude, and through sacrifice, must the seed be sown.

“The sower sows the word.”

Christ came to sow the world with truth.

Ever since the fall of man, Satan has been sowing the seeds of error. It was by a lie that he first gained control over men, and thus he still works to overthrow God's kingdom in the earth and to bring men under his power. A sower from a higher world, Christ came to sow the seeds of truth. He who had stood in the councils of God, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, could bring to men the pure principles of truth. Ever since the fall of man, Christ had been the Revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed, "the word of God, which lives and abides forever," is communicated to men. 1 Peter 1:23. In that first promise spoken to our fallen race in Eden, Christ was sowing the gospel seed.

But it is to His personal ministry among men and to the work which He thus established that the parable of the sower especially applies.

The word of God is the seed.

Every seed has in itself a germinating principle. In it the life of the plant is enfolded. So there is life in God's word. Christ says, "The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. "He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life." John 5:24. In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.

Every seed brings forth fruit after its kind.

Sow the seed under right conditions, and it will develop its own life in the plant. Receive into the soul by faith the incorruptible seed of the word, and it will bring forth a character and a life after the similitude of the character and the life of God.

The teachers of Israel were not sowing the seed of the word of God. Christ's work as a teacher of truth was in marked contrast to that of the rabbis of His time. They dwelt upon traditions, upon human theories and speculations. Often that which man had taught and written about the word, they put in place of the word itself.

Their teaching had no power to quicken the soul. The subject of Christ's teaching and preaching was the word of God. He met questioners with a plain, "It is written." "What says the Scriptures?" "How read you?" At every opportunity, when an interest was awakened by either friend or foe, He sowed the seed of the word. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Himself the living Word, points to the Scriptures, saying, "They are they which testify of Me." And "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," He opened to His disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." John 5:39; Luke 24:27.

Christ's servants are to do the same work. In our day, as of old, the vital truths of God's word are set aside for human theories and speculations. Many professed ministers of the gospel do not accept the whole Bible as the inspired word. One wise man rejects one portion; another questions another part. They set up their judgment as superior to the word; and the Scripture which they do teach rests upon their own authority. Its divine authenticity is destroyed. Thus the seeds of infidelity are sown broadcast; for the people become confused and know not what to believe.

There are many beliefs that the mind has no right to entertain. In the days of Christ the rabbis put a forced, mystical construction upon many portions of Scripture. Because the plain teaching of God's word condemned their practices, they tried to destroy its force. The same thing is done today. The word of God is made to appear mysterious and obscure in order to excuse transgression of His law. Christ rebuked these practices in His day. He taught that the word of God was to be understood by all. He pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith.

The Bible has been robbed of its power, and the results are seen in a lowering of the tone of spiritual life. In the sermons from many pulpits of today there is not that divine manifestation which awakens the conscience and brings life to the soul. The hearers can not say, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke 24:32. There are many who are crying out for the living God, longing for the divine presence. Philosophical theories or literary essays, however brilliant, cannot satisfy the heart. The assertions and inventions of men are of no value. Let the word of God speak to the people. Let those who have heard only traditions and human theories and maxims hear the voice of Him whose word can renew the soul to everlasting life.

Christ's favorite theme was the paternal tenderness and abundant grace of God; He dwelt much upon the holiness of His character and His law; He presented Himself to the people as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Let these be the themes of Christ's ministers. Present the truth as it is in Jesus. Make plain the requirements of the law and the gospel. Tell the people of Christ's life of self-denial and sacrifice; of His humiliation and death; of His resurrection and ascension; of His intercession for them in the courts of God; of His promise, "I will come again, and receive you to Myself." John 14:3.

Instead of discussing erroneous theories, or seeking to combat the opponents of the gospel, follow the example of Christ. Let fresh truths from God's treasure house flash into life. "Preach the word." "Sow beside all waters." "Be instant in season, out of season." "He that has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD."

"Every word of God is pure . . . Add you not to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." 2 Timothy 4:2; Isaiah 32:20; Jeremiah 23:28; Proverbs 30:5, 6.

"The sower sows the word." Here is presented the great principle which should underlie all educational work. "The seed is the word of God." But in too many schools of our day God's word is set aside. Other subjects occupy the mind.

The study of infidel authors holds a large place in the educational system. Skeptical sentiments are interwoven in the matter placed in school books. Scientific research becomes misleading, because its discoveries are misinterpreted and perverted. The word of God is compared with the supposed teachings of science, and is made to appear uncertain and untrustworthy. Thus the seeds of doubt are planted in the minds of the youth, and in time of temptation they spring up. When faith in God's word is lost, the soul has no guide, no safeguard. The youth are drawn into paths which lead away from God and from everlasting life.

To this cause may in great degree be attributed the widespread iniquity in our world today. When the word of God is set aside, its power to restrain the evil passions of the natural heart is rejected. Men sow to the flesh, and of the flesh they reap corruption.

And here, too, is the great cause of mental weakness and inefficiency. In turning from God's word to feed on the writings of uninspired men, the mind becomes dwarfed and cheapened. It is not brought in contact with deep, broad principles of eternal truth. The understanding adapts itself to the comprehension of the things with which it is familiar, and in this devotion to finite things it is weakened, its power is contracted, and after a time it becomes unable to expand.

All this is false education.

The work of every teacher should be to fasten the mind of the youth upon the grand truths of the word of Inspiration. This is the education essential for this life and for the life to come.

And let it not be thought that this will prevent the study of the sciences, or cause a lower standard in education. The knowledge of God is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe. There is nothing so ennobling and invigorating as a study of the great themes which concern our eternal life. Let the youth seek to grasp these God-given truths, and their minds will expand and grow strong in the effort. It will bring every student who is a doer of the word into a broader field of thought, and secure for him a wealth of knowledge that is imperishable.

The education to be secured by searching the Scriptures is an ***experimental*** knowledge of the plan of salvation. Such an education will restore the image of God in the soul. It will strengthen and fortify the mind against temptation, and fit the learner to become a co-worker with Christ in His mission of mercy to the world. It will make him a member of the heavenly family; and prepare him to share the inheritance of the saints in light.

But the teacher of sacred truth can impart only that which he himself knows by experience. “The sower sowed his seed.” Christ taught the truth because He was the truth. His own thought, His character, His life-experience, were embodied in His teaching. So with His servants: those who would teach the word are to make it their own by a personal experience. They must know what it is to have Christ made to them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

In presenting the word of God to others, they are not to make it a suppose-so or a may-be. They should declare with the apostle Peter, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our LORD Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16.

Every minister of Christ and every teacher should be able to say with the beloved John, “The life was manifested, and ***we have seen it***, and bear witness, and show to you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us.” 1 John 1:2.

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