**Being a Christian Means You Prepare Your Heart and Pull Out the Weeds**

The previous two articles are the result from a question about Christian growth. Why is it some obey the Gospel but almost immediately go back into the world, others seem to remain week, yet a group grows and flourishes in the Lord’s Kingdom? I want to go back to the parable of the Sower.

 “And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. "Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.” \*Luke 8:4-7)

Jesus gives an explanation of this parable for His disciples understanding.

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. "But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. (Luke 8:11-14)

I know Jesus speaks of those who are not receptive of the Gospel due to the influence of Satan and those who are productive in the kingdom. But we want to concentrate on those two soils or groups of people who at first take in the word of God but eventually do wither and die away.

Some have no depth of soil. These include those who want to go to heaven but have no commitment to do anything beyond being baptized for the remission of their sins. Bearing the cross is not for them unless it is padded and on wheels. Jesus speaks of counting the cost of being a disciple. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it -- 29 "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 "saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:28-33) The lack o depth, or a shallow heart is not willing to get rid of sin, they are willing to go to heaven as long as they don’t have to actually give up anything.

In our case we determine the softness of our heart. We can till it up and make it more receptive. “Thus Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king; and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonites. 14 And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD. to the Word of God.” (2 Chronicles 12:13-14) We don’t have to be a Rehoboam or an Ahab. We can soften our heart, make room for the Gospel, and cultivate it in our lives.

One of the main causes of a shallow heart is sin. We allow some sins to continue in our lives and think we can still serve God. Peter says growth requires laying aside some things. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,” (1 Peter 2:1) This is not a comprehensive list but you get the idea.

The other group in this article are those who allow the cares and riches of this world choke out the word of God. A few years ago, I planted a garden and it was doing great. Tomatoes were growing, as well as cucumbers, squash, cantaloupe, and some others things. However, we had a rainy spell and I could not cultivate it like it needed. The weeds got the upper hand. You know you are trouble when you have to use a weed eater to find your plants. Pulling out the weeds meant damaging the good plants, letting them group meant the weeds choked out the productive plants. I didn’t get much out of the garden that year.

In our lives we can allow “things” to take over to the point we don’t have enough time to serve God. Have you ever been so busy you don’t have any time for yourself, don’t have time to read, to pray, to think? Perhaps this was not a conscious decision but you wake up and realize you have allowed the cares and riches of this life to take over your life. In this case, you must do some weeding. Reassess your priorities and place God first. This isn’t easy because it means pulling out those weeds of laziness, indifference, of self-indulgence.

I will say to those who are having trouble in your Christian growth, till up the ground, make your heart more receptive, and pull out those weeds. – Dennis Tucker