

## Which Soil Describes Your Heart?

Joe Slater

In His parable of the sower (Luke 8) Jesus described God's word as seed planted into four types of soil (human hearts). The seed's fruitfulness, or lack thereof, depended on the condition of the soil (heart).

First was the "wayside," literally the path or road surrounding the field (Luke 8:5). As seed cannot germinate and grow on hardpacked ground, God's word cannot grow in a hard heart. Satan easily removes the word from the resistant soul

Next came the rock (v. 6). This doesn't mean stony ground, but a thin layer of earth atop bedrock. Seed might sprout on such shallow soil, but the tender shoot would wither and die, having no deep root to reach water. Just so, a person with shallow faith might joyfully receive the word of God at first, but would fall away in times of trial.

Third, Jesus spoke of ground infested with thorns (v. 7). Seed could begin to grow under such conditions, but the thorns would eventually choke out the good plants, rendering them fruitless. Thorns represent distractions – worldly cares, riches, and pleasures (v. 14). God's word produces no harvest in a distracted heart.

Finally, the good ground produced an abundant crop (v. 8). The good, noble heart isn't hard, has a deep and abiding faith, and steers clear of the world's distractions. Such a person not only believes God's word, but keeps it (i.e. obeys it, v. 15).

Which of these four soil types best describes your heart? Are you resisting God's word with a hard heart? Is your faith shallow, fading away when trials appear? Are you distracted with the deceitful world's cares, riches, and pleasures? Or do you have a deep, abiding faith that keeps God's word?

You control the condition of your heart!

## Are We Salty Enough?

The divine wisdom of God is easily seen in the teachings of Jesus. The Master's use of metaphors in His instruction and storytelling transcend time, making them just as understandable to us as they should have been to those who heard them with their own ears. A great example is seen in the following passage:

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men"* (Matthew 5:13).

Salt is a chemical compound composed primarily of sodium chloride and is used to preserve, purify, and season food. In ancient societies it was a valuable social and economic commodity. Salt and its usage are known and recognized the world over. What better image could Jesus have used to describe the influence His followers should have on the world?

Just as salt enhances the flavor of our favorite foods, we should be busy enhancing the lives of those around us. Like reaching for the salt shaker at the dinner table, our friends and neighbors should want to reach out to us when they need a boost during difficult times. Most important of all, we can improve the lives of others by sharing the gospel message.

So how do I become more salty? We begin by developing the type of character described by the following: *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:5–8).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

## Full Assurance Of Faith

While false assurance abounds, there is full assurance in Christ. The apostle John wrote, *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13). What is the source of Christian assurance? In part, it is the result of knowing and following the instructions God has provided in His inspired word.

Such is a far cry from the pseudo-confidence espoused by so many in the religious world today. Confidence is not the result of some better-felt-than-told experience. Nor is it based on the approval of men. It is based on the timeless word of God. Peter writes, *"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God"* (1 Peter 1:22-23). When God's word is the source of spiritual rebirth, confidence is produced. Jesus promises, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away"* (Matthew 24:35).

Assurance based on subjective feelings is faulty to the core. Feelings come and go, changing like the weather. Instead, we must build our hope on the solid rock of God's revealed truth. Ultimately, confidence comes from being in Christ. Paul says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). The Bible tells us that a penitent believer comes into Christ when he is united with Him in baptism (Romans 6:3-4). Then, as we walk in the light of His word, we enjoy continual spiritual cleansing and full assurance of faith (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 10:22).

-- Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)