

# The Pilgrim's Progress

## From the City of Destruction to the Slough of Despond

June 4, 2014

- I. Reading from The City of Destruction to the Slough of Despond
  - A. Observations
    1. Obstinate demonstrates the **immovable stubbornness** of those who are opposed to the Gospel.
    2. Pliable reveals a **fickle readiness** to believe anything for a time.
  - B. Questions
    1. How are Obstinate and Pliable different from each other?
    2. In what ways are they alike?
  
- II. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:18-23) and Pliable, Obstinate and Christian.

<sup>18</sup> **“Hear then the parable of the sower:**

Parable: A story or saying that illustrates a **truth** using comparison, hyperbole or simile.

**Parable = to throw alongside**

**This parable could be titled The Effect of the Word Dependent on the State of the Heart.**

**Jesus intends to give the meaning of the parable, which is to show the different effects the word has on the hearts of mankind and the reasons for the differences.**

The seed is the **word**.

The sower is the **proclaimer** of the **word**.

The soil is the **heart** of **man**.

<sup>19</sup> **When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.**

"None of these were **profane, godless** persons, who make no conscience of neglecting to hear the word preached; they are all **hearers**. Oh how strait is the way, how narrow is the gate, that leadeth to everlasting life! how few there be that find it!" - Matthew Poole

**How was it sown in their hearts, if the devil could thus catch it away? *Ans.* By the heart here is meant the soul, which hath several powers and faculties.**

<sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

"It is possible we may be a great deal better than some others, and yet not be so good as we should be; may go beyond our neighbors, and yet come short of heaven." - Matthew Henry

How far did the rocky ground hearers (e.g. Pliable) go?

- it.
- 1. They *hear the word*; they turn neither their backs upon it, nor a deaf ear to it.**
  - 2. They are *quick in hearing***
  - 3. They receive it with joy.**
  - 4. They *endure for awhile***

How did they fall away, so that no fruit was brought to perfection?

- 1. They have *no root in themselves***
- 2. Times of trial come, and then they come to nothing**

***root in himself* - a principle of grace in a heart truly touched with the love of God and of his truth.**

**Observe, Persecution is represented in the parable by *the scorching sun*, (v. 6); the same sun which warms and cherishes that which was well rooted, withers and burns up that which wanted root.**

**Tribulation (θλιψεως [*thlipseōs*]). From θλιβω [*thlibō*], to press, to oppress, to squeeze (cf. 7:14). The English word is from the Latin *tribulum*, the roller used by the Romans for pressing wheat. Cf. our "steam roller" Trench (*Synonyms of the N. T.*, pp. 202–4): "When, according to the ancient law of England, those who wilfully refused to plead, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally θλιψις [*thlipsis*]." The iron cage was στενοχωρια [*stenochōria*].**

<sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

"Prosperity destroys the word in the heart, as much as persecution does; and more dangerously, because more silently: the stones spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit." - Matthew Henry

*the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

<sup>23</sup> 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 hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

*What is good ground?*

***The good ground, in this parable, is the good and honest heart, that is, a heart renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God.***

(Matthew Poole)

To make a good Christian all these things must concur:

1. A **hearing** of the word.
2. An **understanding** or **believing** it.
3. A **keeping** of it.
4. A bringing forth of **fruit**, but not all alike fruitful
5. A bringing forth fruit with **patience**.

"Now that which distinguished this good ground from the rest, was, in one word, fruitfulness. By *this* true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites, that they *bring forth the fruits of righteousness; so shall ye be my disciples*, Jn. 15:8. He does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but there were none that prevailed to hinder its fruitfulness. Saints, in this world, are not perfectly free from the remains of sin; but happily freed from the reign of it." - Matthew Henry

What's the good news?

Isaiah 55:10-11

<sup>10</sup> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout,

giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but <sup>s</sup>it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

- III. Why did the Son of God come? (1John 3:8)
  
- IV. According to the Parable of the Sower, how does Satan takes the word away?
  - A. **Immediately (Lack of attentiveness, Ill-will or ignorance)**
  - B. **Eventually – Shallow soil and persecution**
  - C. **Eventually – with prosperity**
  
- V. Application – How can we fight Satan’s methods?
  - A. **Prepare** the soil of your heart
  - B. **Listen diligently** to the word of God
  - C. **Welcome** the word of God as you hear
  
- VI. Next week: From the Slough of Despond to the Wicket Gate