

FOUR GROUPS

“A farmer went out to sow his seed” (Matt. 13:3; Mk 4:3; Lk. 8:5)

The parable of the sower is repeated three times in the Bible (Matt. 13:1 - 23; Mk. 4:1 - 20; Lk. 8:4 - 15). In each instance the “Seed” is the Word of God and those who receive the “Seed” are divided into four groups.

1. The first group is represented by seed falling along the path. The birds ate it up and it never had a chance to grow.
2. The second group is represented by seed falling on rocky soil. It sprang up quickly but because it had no depth it was scorched by the sun and withered away.
3. The third group is represented by seed falling among thorns. This seed produced no fruit because the thorns choked the plants.
4. The fourth group is represented by seed falling on good soil. This seed reproduced itself 30, 60, or 100 times over.

Jesus explained the parable in a way that puts everyone reading these words into one of those four different groups. Group # 1 never thinks seriously about the Word of God and consequently never makes any real decision for Christ. Group # 2 has such a shallow and superficial faith that they wither away at the first sign of trouble. Group # 3 starts to grow but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches chokes out the Word so that it produces no fruit. Group # 4 represents believers who produce a harvest for Christ based upon the ability they have received from God.

The Scriptures admonish us: **“Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5)**. Do it now! Stop whatever else you are tempted to do and decide right now to which of these four groups you belong. The devil, of course, is right now trying to distract your mind from this simple process of self examination. If you resist the devil, however, he will flee from you (Ja 4:7). The “good news” is that you can choose to be in any of these four groups that you want to.

Many years ago Ben Bowman came to Seth Wilson and submitted his resignation as an elder of the Center Point Congregation near Carthage, Missouri. He said that he was not qualified to be an elder. Since there was no moral or doctrinal problem in his life, Seth wisely challenged him not to quit, but to repent of his backsliding and get qualified. That is precisely what Ben Bowman did! Seth taught dozens of seminars on elders and deacons and held up Ben Bowman as an example for everyone! Nobody can honor Christ by being lazy and irresponsible!

In the 1960's Harold Lass was an elder in the Curtner Ave. Congregation in San Jose, California. Harold was a brilliant tool and dye maker with a business of his own. Unfortunately, his business became his god. He was so busy with his business that he had almost no time for church, Bible study, prayer, or God. When he went bankrupt he came to realize that the bankruptcy was a blessing. Unencumbered by business concerns he would stop by for prayer on his way to work, never miss a meeting, and make pastoral calls several evenings in the week. Several years later he went back into business. At that time he opened the only “gun drilling” shop in the Bay Area. His shop was an immediate success for local businesses had previously been shipping parts to Los Angeles for this specialized work. This time, however, God came first and the business second. Harold learned that it is possible to be both a businessman and a Christian.

Before ascending into heaven Jesus commanded His disciples to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations (Lk. 24:47). Repentance, however, is not just something we do to become Christians, it is something we continue to do as Christians. Five of the seven churches of Asia were commanded to repent (Rev. 2:5, 18, 22; 3:3, 19).

Since you have a choice, why not repent and choose to be in Group # 4!