

# THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

## *A Detailed Synthesis of Gospel Passages*

Matthew 13:1-23 | Mark 4:1-20 | Luke 8:4-15

### Key Terms

- **Word** = λόγος (Strong's G3056): written or spoken words; what someone has said; a doctrine or teaching
- **Fruit** = καρπός (Strong's G2590): the fruit of trees, vines, and plants; a harvest; works, actions, or deeds

## JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE

Matthew 13:18-23 | Mark 4:13-20 | Luke 8:11-15

Jesus explicitly states the key meanings within the Parable of the Sower by explaining them. He also indicates other meanings as a byproduct of His explanations. In particular, He reveals that this parable is about the kingdom of heaven/God (Mt. 13:11, Lk. 8:10) as related to the salvation of a person by their believing or disbelieving (Lk. 8:12). He identifies the seed being sown to the word of the kingdom/word of God (Mt. 13:19, Lk. 8:11). Therefore, the sower of the seed is the one speaking and teaching the **word** (Mk. 4:14). He also compares the different types of hearers to the different types of soil that the seed lands upon, specifically as it relates to the condition of the hearer's heart (Lk. 8:12 & 15). Jesus begins explaining by rhetorically suggesting that this parable contains essential, entry-level knowledge for understanding all His other parables (Mk. 4:13).

### 1. Roadside Ground/Hearers

- ◆ Do not understand the word about the kingdom of God (Mt. 13:19)
- ◆ The wicked one/Satan/the devil takes away the **word** sown in their heart (**unanimous**)
- ◆ Are unbelieving and unsaved (Lk. 8:12)

### 2. Stony Ground/Hearers

- ◆ Immediately receives the **word** with joy/gladness (**unanimous**)
- ◆ Have no root within themselves (**unanimous**)
- ◆ Endures/believes only for a short while (**unanimous**)
- ◆ Stumble during times of tribulation and persecution for the word's sake (Mt. 13:21)
- ◆ Fall away during times of temptation (Lk. 8:13)

### 3. Thorny Ground/Hearers

- ◆ *Choked* with cares [of this world] and [deceitfulness of] riches (**unanimous**)
- ◆ *Choked* with pleasures of life (Lk. 8:14)
- ◆ *Choked* with other desires (Mk. 4:19)
- ◆ Becomes unfruitful/brings no **fruit** to maturity (**unanimous**)

### 4. Good Ground/Hearers

- ◆ Listen with noble and good hearts (Lk. 8:15)
- ◆ Understands the word (Mt. 13:23, Lk. 8:15)
- ◆ Accept the word (Mk. 4:20)
- ◆ Keep the word (Lk. 8:15)
- ◆ Bears/produces **fruit** (**unanimous**)
- ◆ Are patient during the fruit-bearing process (Lk. 8:15)

### Potential Interpretations of the Fruit Numbers

30 – 60 – 100

( <i>Literal</i> ) Amount Produced	Levels of Ability ( <i>Allegorical</i> )
( <i>Anagogical</i> ) Hebraic Numerology	Levels of Commitment ( <i>Allegorical</i> )

# INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM THE PARABLE

Matthew 13:3-9 | Mark 4:2-9 | Luke 8:4-8

It's commonly assumed that Jesus explained all there is to understand about the Parable of the Sower. However, there are a few noteworthy insights and implications that arise from examining the parable. Particularly, two of them directly relate to the "Perseverance of the Saints" doctrine within the Calvinism–Arminianism discussion.

1. There is a slight shift from the importance of the topsoil to the importance of the environment around it.

Roadside Ground	Bad Soil with Bad Conditions
Rocky Ground	Better Soil with Bad Conditions
Thorny Ground	Good Soil with Better Conditions
Good Ground	Good Soil with Good Conditions

- ◆ The seed on roadside soil is trampled (Lk. 8:5) and the evil one/devil/satan take it away (**unanimous**)  
! *Seed never sprouted. Plant never had life.*
  - ◆ The seed on rocky soil has no moisture (Lk. 8:6) and is scorched by the sun (Mt.13:6, Mk. 4:6)  
! *Seed sprouted but withered. Plant was alive but is now dead.*
  - ◆ The seed on thorny soil is choked [through having its growth stopped/killed] by thorns (**unanimous**)  
! *Seed sprouts and grows slightly but is not fruitful. Plant might be alive, but it is not useful.*
  - ◆ The seed on good soil is unhindered and grows to produce a crop (**unanimous**)  
! *Seed sprouts and grows to produce fruit. Plant is alive and useful.*
2. Jesus never mentions the type of tree produced by the good ground, only that the result was much **fruit**.
    - ◆ Grape vines have more fruit than coconut trees, yet a single coconut is larger than many grapes  
! *Fruit size doesn't equal tree value. Good ground can produce different types of trees.*

## An Apologetic for the Additional Insights and Implications

It stands to reason that Jesus spoke this parable multiple times to different people groups during His ministry. This possibility could be why the recounting of this parable differs slightly in each Gospel passage. For instance: The parable in Matthew and Mark involves the same group of people, but Luke does not identify the setting. Consequently, Jesus may have explained other aspects of the parable (including these) when He retold the story.

### PARABLE POINTS

- ✓ The Parable of the Sower is about the kingdom of God/heaven. (Mt. 13:11, cf. Luke 17:20-21)
- ✓ The Parable of the Sower is related to a person being "saved." (Lk. 8:12, cf. Romans 10:9)
- ✓ The Sower is the person who speaks the **word** to all people. (Mk. 4:14, cf. 2Timothy 4:1-2)
- ✓ Environment is a key factor in our growth and fruitfulness. (**unanimous**, cf. Matthew 24:10-13)
- ✓ The stony ground/hearers fell away and did not endure. (**unanimous**, cf. Matthew 7:15-20)
- ✓ The thorny ground/hearers were barren, useless trees. (**unanimous**, cf. John 15:8)
- ✓ The good ground/hearers produced much **fruit**.

## Tactics of the Adversary in the Parable

Satan will try to blind your eyes to the truthfulness of the Gospel through disbelief (roadside). If he can't succeed that way, he will attack your endurance with hardships that tempt you to abandon your faith in Christ (rocky). If that doesn't succeed, he will try to make you apathetic toward God by enticing you with the lusts of riches and pleasures of life thereby making the cares of this world more important to you than God's commands (thorny).