

Part 4 ~ Contrasts. (part 1 of 2)

***That's right:*** contrasts! This next part (or next 2 parts) is(are) on contrasts - where Jesus explained more about the good ground hearers and contrasting them with those who either ignored the truth or didn't choose to obey what they did know.

### ***Contrasts***

I know, I know. That's a strange topic to switch to next, right? But, I believe we have to see the contrasts Jesus used and His apostles used (while divinely moved to write His Word). Why? Because, in a day and age where the definitions of every word and concept in our language and understanding is changing and shifting almost daily, we must have some sort of reference point to go back to so that we might be able to re-establish in our minds and hearts and lives. Please keep in mind that all the TV, movies, books, magazines, web-stuff and audio files you take in is actively changing your definitions - either toward more clarity and in keeping with God's Word and moving you toward growing in holiness and being able to serve Him effectively, or it is changing your definitions to be 'more loose' allowing the 'freedom' to do more what we want - and that trend is scary because if it continues long without God's chastening hand, it means that we might not yet be saved, only 'interested in Christ', and many in this country (if not around the world) fall into this second category.

So, definitions are important. So, let's dig in and see what we can learn about contrasts.

And to start off, I'd like to skip ahead for just a minute to look at the next parable in Matthew 13.

**“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way...”** (Matthew 13:24-30)

And the explanation:

**“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ He answered and said to them: ‘He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the Kingdom. But the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”** (Matthew 13:36-43)

That is a fascinating, short, concise parable. I plan to come back to it, after our study on the parable on the soils is done, but I just wanted to mention to you. For now, I'd just like to note one key detail.

One easy detail to notice - only 2 families, only 2 types of crops, only 2 types of people -

>> children of God, good (washed by the blood of the Lamb), saved

-or-

>> children and followers of themselves (servants of Satan), rebellious, not saved yet

Those who do not know Christ yet need those who do to reach out to them with the Word of God and explain it to them and calling them to repent, so that they can come to Christ.

***Okay, digging a little deeper:***

\* How did the angels tell the difference between the saved and unsaved?

Verse 41 gives us the answer: “... **and those who practice lawlessness**”. We are not saved by our works, but our works show who is in charge of our lives - us or Him. It can't be both. Obviously, the angels' spiritual eyesight is much better than ours which is tainted by our own desire for self-centered things and pleasures. But, even with that said, I think we can still learn from this little note - those who practice lawlessness (actively doing what they know is wrong and not trying to correct it) are either 1) not saved yet, or 2) experiencing hard times that are teaching them to hate the wrong things they desire and to love and grow in obedience to Christ and His Word. - only options there.

Remember Jesus' words? “**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**” (Matthew 6:24)

And another verse that highlights this point:

“**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**” (2nd Corinthians 5:17)

God is, everyday, allowing us to go through tests that everyday show our true motivations and what got us up out of bed that morning. Learning to identify our life direction and motivation every day is very valuable (almost immeasurably valuable). Why? Because learning that detail will help us see what is most valuable to us (and/or what needs to become most valuable to us), and learning that while we are still living will allow us to get ready to here so that we will have less to cry about there, and make us more useful for Christ here, with our family, friends, and acquaintances.

Another passage on Matthew 13:41 that really relates here is “**A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**” (Luke 6:45)

This principle is really simple - what we take in, comes out. If we take in truth and avoid fantasy, lying, deceptions, and fairytales - it will show (in our favor). However, the other side is that if we only fill our minds with the pollutions of this world that they call 'entertainment', and encourage ourselves to love fantasy books, games, and movies - guess what? It too will show. If we take in the world's thinking and lies, through their music (even so-called Christians stuff), and movies (most are very bad spiritually), and other media, will show because it is influencing us. However, if we are consistently removing those harmful influences from our lives and schedules and including more and more of the Word of God and literal Bible teachers that convict us, that too will show, and we will prove to be a fruitful tree (saved) rather than an unfruitful tree (unsaved). And, that principle is what is described in Galatians 6:7-9 - a passage I like to describe as teaching the principles of 'spiritual gravity' and 'spiritual inertia'. Here's the verse and I'll explain to you what I mean. **"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."** - What we sow shows up in 2 ways - the direction our life is headed (whether it is about our self-centered pleasures or about serving Christ), and in the results and consequences - the fruit of our efforts, if you will. If we see there is a mixture of both, then it means we need to increase our growth in leaving behind unhelpful influences and lifestyle patterns, or it means we have not yet entered into the marriage-type of relationship with Christ, only the engagement process like the 2nd and 3rd soils did and then eventually broke off the engagement to Christ to go after the world.

### ***So, back to Galatians 6 -***

Who is that passage written to? Believers. If you read the verses above and below it, the context is clear - Paul, the apostle, is warning believers what to learn and what to avoid:

- 1) do not to be deceived, and
- 2) do not to sow to flesh, but to sow to the Spirit.

Sowing to the Spirit is not unintentional - it is intentional. I know there is a popular phrase that goes around - 'Let go and let God'. And it sounds spiritual and I think I've used it myself, but it's not Biblical (in most of its meaning). Either today, you and I are making decisions that are in obedience to Christ or we are not ~ there are only 2 answer and only 2 types of choices. And the more we grow in understanding of God's Word and honesty, the more we will be able to determine which we are doing.

But let us not deceive ourselves - if there is a sin that God has been convicting us of for many years, but we are still hiding it and holding onto it, we are not walking in the light, but walking in darkness. Solution - deal with it, even now - and never look back. And, in addition to repenting of it, tell those who that pattern of wrong choices has hurt that you are changing it, and even what you are working on doing differently.

The accountability and honesty in that process is what is needed to set us from patterns of sin and slaveries.

So, it's a daily choice - we are daily feeding one or the other - we are either growing closer to Christ or further away from Him - **daily**. And as Jesus explained, when we sow to our self-centered fleshly desires, we make ourselves slaves of the sins and traps we submit ourselves to. **“Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’”** (John 8:34) The solution? Simple - two verses later, Jesus explained: **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”** (John 8:36) And how can we be free in the Christ? Just a few before it, Jesus filled in these details: **“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

We make time for what is important to us, and if God's Word is becoming more important to us, then we will rearrange our daily schedule and life accordingly. Let's all raise our bar - sound like a plan? :)

From the conversations with people that my family and I have had over the years, many of those who claim to be Christians and at least some of those I believe are genuine believers have never been trained to double-check themselves daily, and/or do not care. This makes me very sad, and I believe it needs to change, so I'm praying that God continues to teach my brothers and sisters (in whatever way necessary) to get their attention - not to do what they know is wrong, and to grow in doing more of what they know is right - for this pattern is one example of producing good fruit.

And, I value those who challenge me in this! Spiritual growth is painful (sometimes), but if a seedling, sapling, little tree or big tree is alive - it will continue to grow (in life, strength, and spiritual service). If it's not alive or genuine, then it will show :) ~ I pray that these studies, including this one, inspire you to aim higher, because I know that's what God's doing in my life too! ~

