
The forms of temptation in the parable of the sower

Having seen in the article “the means and forms of temptation” the forms that temptation can take (especially the trials through affliction and persecution and the trap of obeying the desires of the old man, the flesh) we can also see these categories in action in the parable of the sower. There are two categories in the parable of the sower that though they heard and received the Word they did not bring forth the desired fruit. And the question is why?

1. Temptation in the second category of the parable of the sower

Concerning the second category of the parable of the sower, Matthew 13:20-21 and Luke 8:13 tell us about it:

Matthew 13:20-21
“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; “yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he is offended.”

Luke 8:13
“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.”
As we see, the people of this category heard the Word and they initially received it with joy! In other words they were very enthusiastic about the Word. But then the temptation, the trial, came, and its form was tribulation and persecution for the Word’s sake i.e. because of the Word these people were persecuted. And there they lost the game. Instead of persevering, holding on to the Word they had originally with so much joy received, they stepped back and fell away. If you are a young believer full of zeal for God: though it may seem that the devil is nowhere around you, this will not last forever. The temptation, the trial, will come. You will need to persevere, holding on to the faith and the Word which with so much joy you received. As the Word tells us:

**Hebrews 10:35-39**

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.* For you have need of patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, *and* he who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; **But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.** But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Affliction may take various forms. I have seen people falling away, abandoning the faith, because their parents or relatives and friends confronted them and rejected them because of their faith. Of course persecution may take more severe forms too, like being thrown into a prison or being tortured for your faith. It can also result in death, like it happened for Stephan and James the brother of John. For you and all those that are tried the Word says:

**Romans 16:19-20**
“For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.”

and 1 Peter 5:8-10

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are experienced in your brethren that are in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

Hold on to the faith and do so till the end. Put your life and situation on the hands of God and be ready to go through whatever may come up, yes even ridicule and torture. God is with you. He will strengthen you. He will encourage you. Just like He did with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Just like He did with Paul in the prison, when he was persecuted by the Jews (Acts 23:11). As Paul said: “as we become partakers of the sufferings so also we become partakers of the comfort that comes from God” (2 Corinthians 2:1-7). The comfort that comes from Him outbalances whatever ridicule or torture a man may bring to us.

2. Temptation in the third category of the parable of the sower

Concerning the third category of the parable of the sower, we read about it in Mark 4:18-19:
“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

And Luke 8:14
“Now the ones [that] fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

These men heard the Word, understood the Word yet became fruitless. Why? Because they left the door of their heart open to the thorns of “the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things” (Mark 4:19), which entering in, choked the Word. As we have already seen James saying:

James 1:13-15
“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death.”

and 1 Timothy 1:6-9 tells us
“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”
Something to note: The same effect as the temptation of riches and the lusts of other things have also the cares of this world. They also bring fruitlessness. Therefore if you want to be a Christian who brings forth fruit, i.e. a real Christian and not just a Christian by name, you should remove the thorns of the cares, riches and pleasures of life and prevent them from coming back again. You need to take action. You need to change, and God will help you in this if you really want it. The temptation in the third category of the parable of the sower does not come through persecution and affliction by the devil. Here the temptation takes more subtle forms, which however require again our resistance. Caring about what this world cares (“the cares of this world”), wanting riches or lusting after other things are very dangerous. They are thorns that have to be removed. As we saw Paul saying:

Romans 13:14

“put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts.”

“Make no provision for the flesh” means that we should not take care of the flesh and its desires. Instead we should feed ourselves with the pure milk of the Word so that we grow through it (1 Peter 2:2).

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