

be first "the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of." **These have no root**—Matt. "no root in himself," he has not the stability which personal conviction gives. He comes forth "at the call of a shallow enthusiasm, and through the epidemic influence of a popular cause" (Edward Irving) In time of temptation—When anything comes to put their religion to the test they show that they are not willing to sacrifice their pleasure or their gain to the demands of truth and conscience. (Ps 106: 12; Isa. 58: 2; Ezek. 33: 31, 32; Hosea 6: 4; John 5: 35; Gal. 4: 15;) "There is another profound truth in this picture. The hard, impenetrable rock lies right under the thin skin of soil. The nature which is over-emotional on its surface is utterly hard at its core. The most heartless people are those whose feelings are always ready to gush; the most unimpressible are those who are most easily brought to a certain degree of emotion by the sound of the word." (McLaren) (Matt. 24: 10; 26: 31; 2 Tim. 4: 16.)

**III. THE THORNY GROUND 7. Among thorns**—the stout roots of thorny plants remaining in the soil. These would grow faster than the grain and choke it. (Jer. 4: 3.) **Cares and riches and pleasures**—"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." (M. Henry.) (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10; 2 Tim. 4: 10; 1 John 2: 15-17). **No fruit to perfection**—The straw may be stout but the ear is chaff. This is the "double-minded" man (Jas. 1: 8). "His will is divided—not decided for good and against evil, but now on one side, now on the other; serving God today, serving mammon tomorrow; very religious and also very worldly. The ear will be green when it should be ripe. He is a misthriven Christian, a spiritual failure. His influence is zero, or worse—mischievous." (Bruce.) "He is trying to grow both corn and thorns on the same soil. He has some religion, but not enough to make thorough work of it. He is endeavoring to ride two horses at once. Religion says 'either—or,' he is trying 'both—and!' The human heart has only a limited amount of love and trust to give, and Christ must have it all. It has enough for one—that is, for Him; but not enough for two—that is, for Him and the world" (McLaren.) (Luke 14: 16-24; Matt 10: 23.)

**IV. THE GOOD GROUND. 8. Into the good ground** (R. V.)—deep, fertile and free of weeds. **An hundred fold**—In Matthew's version three degrees of fertility are specified—"an hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold." All who receive the word have

not the same capacities and opportunities. Nor do all make proper use of what they have.

**15. An honest and good heart**—"Honest" is here in the sense of "noble." "One whose mind is raised above moral vulgarity, and is bent, not on money-making, and such low pursuits, but on the attainment of wisdom, holiness and righteousness. 'Good' denotes generous self-abandonment in the prosecution of such lofty ends—large-heartedness, magnanimous, overflowing devotion"—(Bruce.) "We here see that the principal qualification for hearing the Word of God, and for rendering it capable of bearing fruit in us, is an honest and a good heart, a heart clear from prejudice, pride and self-conceit, sincerely disposed, and earnestly desirous 'to find the truth; and firmly resolved to embrace it when found; ready to acknowledge its own ignorance, and weakness, and corruption, and to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul.'" (Bp. Porteus.) **Keep it**—Matthew says, "he that heareth the word and understandeth it," lit. "takes it in." Biblical usage does not regard "understanding" as a purely intellectual process, but rather as the action of the whole moral and spiritual nature. (McLaren.) (Ps. 119: 11) "The precise distinction of the perfect hearer is this,—that he receives and retains the word *alone* in his mind. He is characteristically single-minded and whole-hearted in religion. He loves God, and seeks the kingdom of God in accordance with the high requirements, 'with *all* thine heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy might.' He is wholly given up to, devoted to, the kingdom; for him, as for the Preacher, to 'fear God and keep his commandments' is 'the whole of man' (Ecc. 12: 13, lit.) (Bruce.) **And bring forth fruit**—Matt. reads "which also beareth fruit." "The force the of Greek is "who of course (indeed, certainly) bring forth fruit" "The fruitfulness of such a hearer Jesus regarded and represented as a matter of course." (Bruce.) **With patience**—"perseveringly" (Rom. 2: 7; Matt. 24: 13; Jas. 1: 4). "The fourth class must not be understood as a decided, well-marked company excluding all the rest. For the soil is *not good by nature*. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; but every disposition to receive them is of God." (Alford.) "We must ever bear in mind that the good soil comes as much from God as the seed which is to find there its home. God's secret and preventing grace runs before the preaching of the word of the kingdom; and thus, when that word comes, it finds some with greater readiness for receiving it, as the word of eternal life, than others." (Trench.) (Matt. 10: 22; 24: 13; 2 Pet. 1: 5-8.) The conclu-