

FARMERS FOR THE LORD

DAY ONE: THE WAYSIDE GROUND

KING AGRIPPA - ALMOST PERSUADED

Acts 26

This lesson will study the example of King Agrippa who was almost persuaded to become a Christian. It will help us to see what the Lord meant when he talked about "wayside soil" and how it represented a hardened heart.

Introduction:

1. The Parable of the Sower teaches us about the kinds of hearts that men may possess.
2. These types of hearts are illustrated by four different types of soil onto which seeds fell.
3. The success or failure of the planted seed was dependent upon the kind of soil in which it was planted.
4. By learning about these soils, we can learn the kind of heart (mind) that is needed to bear fruit for the Lord.
5. The first type of soil is the **wayside ground**.

I. The Description of the Soil

(Matthew 13:1-4)

- A. "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."
 1. In the days before farm machinery, seeds were sown by hand.
 2. Sometimes, this would involve making a hole in the ground and planting one seed at a time.
 3. However, Jesus describes a man who is scattering seeds by the handful upon a field that has been prepared by being broken up.
 4. In this means of spreading seeds, many would land upon the prepared soil; but, some would fall outside of the field...
 - a. Some on the wayside soil
 - b. Some on stony ground
 - c. Some among the thorns
- B. First, Jesus speaks of seeds that fell upon the ground that was by the way side.
 1. The wayside soil was not a part of the prepared field.
 2. Instead, it was the ground around the field where people walked.
 3. In fact, the Greek word means, "Road" or "Way."
 4. Thus, this soil was hard packed and could not be penetrated by the seeds.
- C. The seeds that fell upon this soil were "trodden down" as people passed by and stepped on them (Luke 8:5).
- D. And, because they did not penetrate the soil, they were eaten by birds.

II. The Explanation of the Heart

(Matthew 13:18-19)

- A. "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower."
 1. Jesus wanted those who heard to understand His teaching.

2. Thus, He explained the meaning of the parable.
- B. This description of soil is meant to illustrate the heart of man.
- C. Just as soil can become packed and hardened, so man can harden his heart.
 1. Pharaoh (Exo. 8:15, 19, 32)
 2. The Philistines (1 Sam. 6:6)
 3. The Israelites (2 Kin. 17:7-14; Neh. 9:16-17, 29)
 4. King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:20).
 5. The Jews (Acts 19:8-9)
 6. Even disciples of Christ (Mark 6:52; 8:17; Heb. 3:8 – 4:7)
- D. This means that a man becomes stubborn in his thinking or opinion and will not hear or accept the truth.
- E. In Jesus' explanation, He described a person who listened, but did not understand or grasp what was being taught.
- F. This was not because the message was unable to be understood, but because they had not prepared their hearts to hear it.
 1. Some listened, but with indifference – *they did not care because they did not think that they needed what Jesus was teaching* (Luke 10:29; 18:9-14; John 8:31-34).
 2. Some listened, but with prejudice – *they could not accept Jesus as the Son of God, nor could they accept His teaching which differed from their traditions and opinions* (John 8:56-59; 10:30-33; Mark 7:5-13).
 3. Some listened, but with worldliness – *they desired things that were sinful more than the truth of the Gospel* (John 1:10-11; 3:19-21).
 4. Some listened, but with hypocrisy – *they only wanted to appear righteous outwardly and did not really want to change their thoughts or actions* (Matt. 23:5-7, 27-28).
- G. Because of the condition of their hearts, the devil was able to take away the impact of the word.
 1. Thus, they would not believe it.
 2. And, of course, they would not obey it.
 3. As a result, they would bear no fruit for the Lord.
- H. It is dangerous to cause or to allow one's heart to become hardened against the Word of God.

III. The Illustration of King Agrippa (Acts 26:24-32)

- A. The man we read about in Acts 25 – 26 was Herod Agrippa II.
 1. His father was Herod Agrippa I and his great-grandfather was Herod the Great.
 2. Agrippa was very kind to the Jews.
 3. However, he was involved romantically with his sister, Bernice (Ac. 25:13).
- B. Agrippa was brother-in-law to Felix and had learned of Paul's imprisonment.
- C. Curious about Paul and his teaching, he asked to hear from him (Acts 25:22-27).
- D. When he gave Paul permission to speak, Paul used it as an opportunity to preach the Gospel (Acts 26:1-23).
- E. However, Paul also declared some important facts about Agrippa.
 1. First, he was an expert in Jewish customs and controversies (26:2-3).
 2. Next, he was aware of the facts concerning Jesus (26:26).
 3. Finally, he was knowledgeable in the Old Testament Scriptures (26:27).
- F. Yet, in spite of these facts, Agrippa would not obey the Gospel and become a Christian.
- G. He declared, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

1. The word 'almost' comes from 2 Greek words meaning, "In little, small, few, short, or slight."
 2. Thus, the ASV reads, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian."
 3. The ESV reads, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"
 4. Young's Literal Translation states, "In a little thou dost persuade me to become a Christian!"
 5. The last is probably the most accurate translation, but it leaves the meaning obscure.
 6. Whatever the exact meaning, the principle is still the same – Agrippa hardened his heart to the Gospel and was not convinced to become a Christian.
- H. Agrippa heard the Gospel, but his heart was hardened against it.
1. Perhaps he was indifferent and thought he did not need it.
 2. Perhaps he was prejudiced against it because of his association with the Jews.
 3. Perhaps he was worldly and did not want to give up his sinful relationship.
 4. Perhaps he was hypocritical and only wanted to appear religious.
- I. In the end, to be almost persuaded is to be unpersuaded and to remain lost.