

Is Eternal Life Dependent on Spiritual Growth?

Luke 8:4-15 -Parable of the Soils (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20)

- I. The disciples would have been very familiar with the Illustration of sowing seed, but they had to ask about the interpretation.
- II. Jesus spoke in parables so that those who believed in Him could understand newly revealed truth about Old Testament mysteries.
 - A. The principle is "When you respond to the spiritual light you've been given, you'll receive more light-more understanding. But when you reject the light, the opposite happens. (Matt. 13:12)
- III. Some have interpreted this parable in a way that denies assurance of eternal life.
 - A. Arminian View
 - B. Lordship Salvation (Reformed) View

IV. How did Jesus interpret His own parable?

- A. We should interpret this parable to mean what His disciples heard.
 1. When the seed falls on the hardened path there is clearly no belief on the part of the person illustrated here.
 - a) *The Word of God is powerful to save people.*
 - b) *But Satan tries to nullify the power of God's Word.*
 - c) *Belief is the sole condition for salvation. But faith and works (cooperation and obedience) are necessary for spiritual growth and fruitfulness.*
 - d) *This person did not believe and was not saved.*
 - (1) Satan steals away the Word of God lest they believe and are saved.
 - (2) Matt. 13:19 They do not understand it.
 2. The person illustrated by the seed growing among the rocks is clearly said to have believed, but is deterred from growing in discipleship by difficult circumstances.
 - a) *This person did believe the Word of God. (It sprang up, it germinated.)*
 - b) *His faith resulted in the gift of eternal life.*
 - c) *This passage never says this person does not have eternal life.*

- (1) It does not teach a qualitatively different kind of belief.
 - (2) It does not teach that a continuance in belief is necessary to achieve justification, since the person who believes receives salvation as the immediate consequence of believing (7:50).
 - (3) A person cannot "fall away" from something they never had.
 - d) *This parable deals with endurance in order to be fruitful.*
 - (1) Matt. 13:21 He endures for a little while but stumbles when persecution comes. (Luke says he "falls away")
 - e) *Application:*
 - 3. The person illustrated by the seed growing among the thorns is more committed to things of this world than living for God's eternal values.
 - a) *This person does not endure in bearing fruit because he is too distracted by other things.*
 - b) *"Bearing fruit" talks about spiritual maturity, not receiving the gift of eternal life.*
 - (1) The word "fruit" in verse 14 means to bear fruit to maturity.
 - (2) Spiritual fruit illustrates spiritual maturity. (John 15:1-11)
 - c) *This person is never described as not having eternal life.*
 - d) *Matt. 13:22 He becomes unfruitful.*
 - e) *Application:*
 - 4. The person illustrated by the seed growing in the good soil believes and grows to spiritual maturity which produces attitudes and actions which are godly. (Gal 5:22-23)
 - a) *This person's noble and good heart keep the Word (obedience).*
 - b) *This person grows to spiritual maturity.*
 - c) *Notice that this process requires patient effort.*
 - d) *Notice various believers will have differing amounts of fruitfulness. (which is not automatic)*
- B. Application: We must apply this passage correctly.
- 1. Our faith in Jesus Christ gives us the gift of eternal life.
 - 2. In order to bear the fruit of spiritual maturity we must endure in our obedience to God, even in times of testing, and maintain a committed focus on becoming more like Jesus Christ.
 - a) *Our spiritual growth and discipleship are not guaranteed even though the Word of God is as powerful as God is. We must cooperate by properly understanding and applying the Word of God to our own life.*
 - b) *Tony Evans wrote, "The parable's point is clear: It is the condition of the heart in its openness to receive and respond to God's word that will determine the word's effectiveness in a Person's life."*
 - 3. As Jesus told this parable He saw each type of person in the crowd of listeners.
 - 4. Which one are you?