

A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING NO. 3305

A SERMON
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*“Jesus said unto them, Have you understood all these things?”
Matthew 13:51.*

THIS is a question which might often be asked of us when we have been reading the Scriptures, when we have been attending upon the public means of grace, or when we have been partaking of the Lord’s Supper—“Have you understood all these things?” It were well for someone to run up to us, as Philip did to the eunuch, who on his return from Jerusalem was reading in his chariot, and say to us as Philip did to him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Or the question might be put to us, “Do you understand what you hear? Do you understand even what you say?” I fear there are hundreds of religionists in this country who never think of understanding that which they attend to under the name of religion. They pass through the habitual forms, listening to and it may be, joining in the liturgy, till at length the service is finished, the day is over and the thing is done! The language of devotion has thus slipped through the lips without having leaped from the heart. Among ourselves, I fear there may be many who are content with listening to the sound of gracious words, who never pierce through the shell of the words into the kernel of the meaning—satisfied with the external, which is nothing—they miss the internal, which is everything!

“Do you understand these things?” then, is a question which may be asked and should be asked often of every worshipper, for it is only so far as we enter into religious worship, *understanding* what we are doing, and casting our hearts into it, that it can be at all acceptable to God. The Lord’s Prayer is quite as good said backwards as forwards if you do not say it from the heart. There is quite as much likelihood of a benediction in a number of words thrown out pell-mell, without any kind of connection, as there would be in the best-arranged sermon, if there is not an attentive ear and an understanding heart. Words that touch not the understanding glide over us as oil over a slab of marble, without effect. Men may perish with the gospel in their houses! They often do perish with the gospel ringing in their ears, for until they understand its importance, it cannot become a soul-saving word to them!

Nor can it become a sanctifying word to any except as far as they receive it into the understanding. If we were to hear the gospel in Latin, after a fashion never so orthodox, one might be no more edified by it than by listening to so much blasphemy, because it is not the thing heard, but the thing understood and received into the heart which blesses the soul. Do let me exhort all of you who are in the habit of going up to the house of God, never to be content unless you feel that you have got a hold upon the truth of God that is being taught. O you Christian people, I beseech you not to be satisfied with merely the terms of theology without getting into the pith and marrow of them! To realize in your own soul, by experience, the meaning of a doctrine is the only way of knowing it! Those men never forget a truth who have had it burned into them as with a hot iron, by feeling the bitterness of their soul for need of it and the preciousness of that truth to their soul when they receive it. He who does not receive the truth of God in the very power and force of it has but a name to live while he is dead.

I think these observations are warranted from the fact that though our Lord preached the mystery of the kingdom of heaven in the plainest parables to the listening crowd, the very plainness of His speech, in using familiar metaphors to make spiritual truths common, became, through the hardness of their hearts, embarrassing to them—they stumbled at the mere outward figure, but never learned the inward meaning! It was to His own chosen twelve, His favored and elect ones; He expanded the riddles when He took them aside and then afterwards inquired of them lest they should have missed the meaning of His exposition,

“Have you understood all these things?” The outward testimony of the gospel may be addressed to the multitude, but the *understanding* of it is conveyed with transparent clearness to His own people. To hear it is a privilege, but such a privilege as may end without the salvation of your soul and with the aggravation of your doom! But to understand it is the privilege which leads to eternal life—and happy are they who thus find the way to God’s right hand.

I. Let us first consider this searching question—“Have you understood all these things?”—as spoken to those who can humbly, but yet confidently, say, “YES, WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THESE THINGS.”

I believe there are many of us here who, although we would not like to boast of what we know and could but confess our ignorance before God, yet dare not be so false to our own experience as to deny that we do know the things which make for our eternal peace. We can say with the man whose eyes were opened, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” We understand at least as much as this—that we are sinners, lost and ruined in ourselves, and that in Jesus all our help is found. We understand that we were cast away in the first Adam, and that our rescue is found in the second Adam, to whom we look and to whom we are now united by a union that can never be broken. We understand this, also, that upon His advent into this world, upon His holy life, His blessed death, His resurrection, His ascension and the power which He now possesses at the right hand of the Father—upon Him in all these respects we rest, and rest entirely! If we have not learned enough to understand all mysteries and open up all prophesies, yet we do know that Christ is precious to our soul, that He is the appointed Savior, that He is *our* Savior and that we are saved through Him. Yes, blessed be His name, we can say that we have understood, in our measure, all these things—not as we shall understand them, not as we shall know them, by-and-by, when clouds and darkness shall all have disappeared and we shall be in the clear light of the throne of God—but we have understood these things sufficiently to be led to cast ourselves on Jesus and to be affected in our daily life and conversation by the truths which Jesus Christ has taught us!

If we have thus understood all these things, what then? *Let us be thankful to God with all our hearts that we can say as much as this*, for this understanding of divine truth is not due to any natural intelligence that we possess! We were by nature blind as bats to the things of divine truth. Neither is it by searching that we have found out God, for it was by His searching after us rather than by our searching after Him. If we have received an understanding to know Him and the height and depth of His precious love, truly we have received it as a free grace gift from the hand of our Lord! Had He withheld it, we would never had found the Savior! But it is because He, out of His own good pleasure, irrespective of anything in us, was pleased to touch our eyes with eye-salve that we should see, and to bring us out of darkness into His marvelous light! It was because of His rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace that we have been made what we are! Come, then, let us bless the name of God! Do we feel distressed with remaining sin? Yet let each one of us remember, “By the grace of God I am what am.” If I have but little grace, let me be thankful for that little—I might have had none at all. And if I am struggling with corruption, let me be thankful that I have grace to struggle with it, for time was when I would have enjoyed my corruptions instead of lamenting and deploring them! Whatever trial may depress my spirit, let me not rob my God of a song, but if, indeed, He has made me to understand the things which save my soul, let me praise Him and extol Him for His amazing grace towards such an undeserving one—the least deserving of all His family!

Further, brothers and sisters, if you have been led to understand these things, *ought not this to encourage you to seek to understand more?* The young beginner in grace should feel that it will not be impossible for him to grow to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus because grace has quickened him and made him a babe. That is the greatest thing—to be made alive at all! When grace has gone so far as to give me life and put me in the family of God, I need not fear but what grace will nurture that life and ultimately bring me to perfection! If I find myself growing in God’s garden, though I am the tiniest plant in all the bed, yet it is such a mercy to be in the garden at all—I who was a wild rank weed out in the wilderness before—that I will not doubt but what He will water me when I need it and that He will tend and care for me till I shall come to perfection. Never think, dear Christian friend, that you cannot master the gospel doctrine! Why, you have learned that Christ is yours—that is the secret of the Lord! All other

doctrines after this are learnable and comparatively easy. Give yourself up to the teaching of the divine Spirit. Wait upon Him in believing prayer and He that has led you through the veil will not keep back the keys of any of the chambers of the temple that shall be profitable for you to enter! Having understood so much, it behooves you to hope to understand more—and as an intelligent believer in Christ, it becomes you to seek to understand more!

And surely if you have understood all these things, my dear Christian friend, you should not be backward to tell them to others! We are not sent in the divine school to be scholars merely for ourselves. We are to be in this world as pupil-teachers—pupils always, but teachers, too; pupils learning constantly at the Master's feet, and at the same time, teachers instructing others in the truths of God we know. Let it never be supposed that the office of teaching in the Christian church can exclusively belong to one man, or to one class of men! It belongs to every Christian man, and to every Christian woman, too! You cannot teach beyond what you have been taught of God, and it is in proportion as you are taught of God that your teaching takes a wider sphere. But you must teach what you know! You will seldom learn much to your own profit unless you are diligent in imparting knowledge and edifying one another, for it is in the distribution to the rest of the brotherhood of the good things which God has given you that you shall enjoy the blessing of the Lord which makes rich! If you will not communicate to the backsliding, to the desponding and to the feeble, the comforts which God gives you, you have cause to fear that in your time of trouble you may have those comforts withheld which you once stifled in your own breast, not knowing how to use them for the church's benefit! Never keep a truth of God to yourself, my brother! Have you found honey? There are other mouths that would gladly know its flavor and there is enough in that Jonathan's forest of the Scripture for all the hosts of Israel to eat! They cannot exhaust it! Thus would I have you tell others what a dear Savior you have found; let other candles be lit from your candle, and your candle shall burn none the less brightly! But rather in this it may be said that to enrich yourselves in all knowledge, you must enrich others with the knowledge that you have!

“Have you understood all these things?” There I will leave you, dear people of God. May your hearts glow and your thoughts be stirred in pondering this question of the text when you are alone!

II. But SOME WHO THINK THEY UNDERSTAND ALL THESE THINGS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM.

In all our congregations we have many who would say, as quickly as the question was heard, “Do you understand all these things?” “Indeed I do! I have been a hearer these 30 years. I tell you, sir, I know the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism! A man is not going to deceive me—as soon as I hear a sermon, I can tell at once whether it is sound or unsound.” Well then, dear friend, I am glad to hear that you have so much knowledge. But I want to ask you—Is your life in accordance with what you know? Knowing the right from the wrong so well, is your life conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, or are you living for the world as if you did not know anything about these things? Because, let me say to you, dear friends, it is a very, very solemn thing to have a sort of understanding of divine truth, but not to be affected by it so as to repent of sin, so as to live unto God, so as to seek after holiness! All this religion of yours will be a painted pageantry for you to go to hell in—it will be nothing better than a millstone tied about your neck to sink you deeper and deeper! It were better, very likely, for you that you never had known the way of salvation at all than that having known it, you should have done despite to it and have lived in opposition to its spirit and its precepts! You had better have been born in the interior of Africa and never have listened to the missionary telling of the crucified one, than to have been born in London and fostered under an orthodox ministry, if you mislead your soul with a name to live while you are dead, boasting about your knowledge, but never proving your holiness! Talking about faith, but having a faith that is lifeless, producing no fruits, resulting in no works answerable to your profession! I charge you, knowing professor, to remember your solemn responsibility! I beseech you, as you love your own soul, not to make a downy bed out of your knowledge, for it shall be a thorn in your dying pillow! I charge you not to make hell hotter to yourself than it need be by taking all this knowledge in and panting after more, while you

forget that “to obey is better than sacrifice,” to trust is better than to boast, to love is better than to rival and to serve out of simple affection is better than to chatter, to discuss, to criticize and to censure!

It were well if everyone who understands the things of the gospel, or who think he does, would constantly examine himself about this business, especially those of us who are ministers. It is a very easy thing for us to be self-deceived—probably easier for us than for any other people because, having a sacred office for a secular vocation, we handle these things every day. Assuming it to be our duty to admonish others, we are prone to resent admonition ourselves. If we have not been converted, it is the least likely thing in the entire world that we ever will be. I have made the remark myself, and I have heard it verified by others, that for pew-openers to be converted is a thing probably unheard of. They are busy here and there, till they are known to forget their own obligation to worship! Unless they are converted before they take that office—concerning which I think we should make strict inquiry—in all likelihood they never will be because they are so concerned about the pews, and about putting people in them, and I know not what besides, that it seems impossible for them to give their ears to hear, or their conscience to feel, or that the voice of truth should ever reach them. Next to them comes the preacher who is always dealing with the shell of truth. When he sits down to read the Bible, he cannot help thinking whether this or that text would make a sermon. When he is praying, often the temptation is to glide into a kind of ministerial prayer—not the prayer of a poor sinner coming near to God!

Perhaps, after all, the least likely person to get a blessing is the knowing professor! I tell you that the drunk and the harlot are often rescued when such professors are not even reached with the thrilling message! The sermon which is made useful to a man who never heard the gospel before is of no use to the hard-headed critic, because he knows too much to get any good out of it! Oh, there are some people you cannot preach to aright. If the Holy Spirit Himself were to speak, they would accuse Him of being heterodox! If an angel from heaven were to deliver the truth of God fresh from the mouth of God, he would not satisfy them. They are always on the look-out for a word amiss. They are always seeking, if they can, to pick holes, detect flaws and find fault—this is their trade, their craft, the thing at which they are expert—to make the message of mercy a kind of target into which they may shoot their arrows! These men seldom, I might almost say, never, get a blessing. I do not see how they can. The infinite mercy of God can do what it will, but seldom does God’s sovereignty light on these shallow professors who are eaten up with conceit. Oh, for a solemn searching, a sincere self-examination of our hearts! Perhaps we may find that our heads are growing and our hearts are shriveling. Some children die early because they get the rickets. Their heads are too big, poor things, and there are many professors with big heads and small hearts. Alas, they have not got the life of God in them at all! God save us from this temptation!

III. Are there not in every congregation **SOME WHO WOULD HARDLY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION**—“Have you understood all these things?”

They do understand them, yet they do not. They do up to a point theoretically comprehend them, but spiritually and experimentally, they discern them not. Fearing lest there might be in the present assembly such as really do not understand the very first principles of the truth of God, I would pointedly and earnestly address myself to their particular case. My dear friend, it would be a very dreadful thing for your soul to be lost for lack of knowledge and to perish for lack of understanding! Solomon says that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good. You tell me that you understand the gospel. I reply to you, then why do you not accept it? You know you are lost, you tell me. You know that Jesus Christ is set forth as the only Savior and you know that a simple trust in Him will save you. How is it you can continue peaceful and happy while you are not a partaker of the grace of God? How is it you can remain satisfied when knowing there is but one way of salvation, you have not yet entered upon it, when, acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, and to be the only way of salvation, you have lived up till now a despiser or a neglecter of Him? I would gladly hope—for it would be the only excuse I could offer for you—that perhaps, after all, you really do *not* understand these things which you think you do. Let me remind you now—you are an unsaved sinner, you are lost, your sin has condemned you, you fell in Adam, you have sinned personally and actually and you are condemned to die! It is not that one day you will be

condemned—you are already condemned! At this present moment you are spared and allowed to go about this world, but you are like a criminal in a condemned cell! The sentence has gone out against you and only God's long-suffering keeps that gleaming axe from falling and utterly destroying you! Do you understand that? Have you really got that thought into your mind? There you are, just like a man about to be beheaded, with your neck on the block, and the axe lifted up—and it may fall—while I am yet speaking, the axe of death may fall and you, soul and body, may be lost forever before that clock ticks again! You know this, but do you really understand it? Will you try to understand it? Will you try to make it real to your thoughts tonight? For I think if you would, there might be some hope that now you would escape from your present ruin and lift up your heart to the great Father of mercies, and say, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

You know another truth of God and you say you understand it. Let me put it to you. Jesus Christ came into this world. He was God's only-begotten Son, but He became man and as man, for man He suffered. God most punish sin, but He punished Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. And those who trust Him are secure because Jesus Christ was their substitute—and they go free. Now, there is no other hope of redemption from the fiery wrath of God but by having a part and lot in the substitutionary work of Christ! You know that, but you have not got a part and lot in it and you must be lost if you continue without that part or lot. How is it that you can be quiet? You sleep soundly at night. You eat and drink cheerfully and you sometimes enjoy a merry ringing laugh. How can you revel in the pleasures of sense? How can you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids until you get the one thing necessary, the one thing which alone can make eternity happy—that infinite future upon which you are so soon to enter? If Jesus Christ, standing in heaven, is preached to you tonight and you are bid to believe in Him, and you do not believe in Him, then you do, as far as you can, crucify Him afresh and open His wounds again and make them bleed! Do you mean to do that? Do you understand that this is what you are doing every day? Would you, dear friend, would you call God a liar? And yet the Apostle John says that, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Do you understand what this unbelief of yours really is? You doubt Christ! That is to say, you do not think Christ to be truthful, or good, or able, or strong! Oh, but you say, you know better than that! Then, if you know better why do you act as if you did not know better? If He is able to save, and willing to save, O my dear hearer, why not come to Him as you are and cast yourself at His feet—and rest in Him in whom your only rest can be found? "Have you understood all these things?" then, is a question which you cannot, after all, answer in the right way! I beseech you never to rest until you can!

Should there be, my dear hearers, something which keeps you back from Christ, arising not so much from your need of will as from your need of knowledge, may God the Holy Spirit stir up your desire and never let you rest till you know Christ, till you so hear that your soul shall live! How shall you know? He is the great teacher, but in the use of means He will teach you. Be content in attending the house of God where Christ is most preached. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Him. Go to the Father of mercy and plead with Him ere you sleep. Pray to Him thus, "Father, if there is some sin that I do not know to be a sin; that I am indulging in, and that keeps me from Christ, show it to me and enable me to give it up. Or if it is a sin which I do know, but seem to have struggled with in vain, my Father, strengthen me that I may cut off the right arm and pluck out the right eye sooner than cherish those vain delights which bode my everlasting destruction." Plead with Him thus—"O my God, I want to know Your Son! Reveal Your Son in me, for so I read You do to Your people. Reveal your Son in me by the Holy Spirit! I am a poor, blind, ignorant sinner, but teach me, for have You not given the Spirit of God on purpose to be the teacher of the ignorant and the instructor of the babes?" Plead with the Lord, and plead always with the recollection that you cannot ask because you deserve, but you must ask because Christ deserves! Plead His wounds, His blood, His death, His infinite merit and you shall, before long—I am certain of it—you shall before long, in answer to your cries, receive light from

the Word, and in that light you shall see light and you shall understand the things which make for your peace!

I am deeply concerned for some of you, especially for such of you as often listen to my voice, that I may not forever keep on talking into your ears and never reach your hearts. What? Am I to rock your cradle and send you to sleep that you may sleep yourselves into hell? Is mine to be the voice that is really to increase your responsibility and not to be the means of bringing you to Jesus? I pray God to avert so dreadful a result to all our ministry, but may you be led this very night—for God's people have been praying for you—may you be led this very night to confess that you do not understand what you ought to understand and go to the great and wise God to teach and instruct you! And as surely as His word is the truth of God, He will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go and bring you to Himself. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Thus says His own word, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Trust: that is the main matter. To believe is to trust, to rely on, to depend upon—he that depends upon Jesus, trusts Him, believes in Him, is saved! May we be of that blessed number and His shall be the glory. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:1-23.

Verses 1, 2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a boat, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.* I think I can see the little ship at a convenient distance from the shore so as to keep off the multitudes of people, in order that the Savior might speak more freely. There He sits with a boat for a pulpit. There were no conventionalities about the Lord Jesus when He was upon the earth—He was willing to speak to the people anywhere from any pulpit whatever!

3. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.* [See Sermon #2842, Volume 49—THE SOWER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was probably at that season of the year when the sowers were going forth to sow their seed, so Jesus pointed to them as to a living text. He was always wide-awake to make use of everything that occurred round about Him. "A sower went forth to sow." For what else should he go forth? Yet some sowers that I know of do not go forth to sow, but to exhibit themselves and to show how well they can do their work. This man aimed at sowing and nothing else. Oh, that all preachers did the same!

4. *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside.* He could not help that. He was not sent to pick the soil, that would be too much responsibility for him. If we had to preach only to certain characters, we should be taking up all our time in picking out those characters! And probably we would make many mistakes while trying to do it. Our business is to scatter the good seed broadcast. We are not to dabble in the Word of God—we are to throw it as far as we can, and to let it fall wherever God pleases. "Some seeds fell by the wayside"—on ground trodden hard by the passers-by.

4. *And the fowls came and devoured them up.* Those fowls are always ready to devour the good seed. Wherever there is a congregation meeting to hear the word, there are always plenty of devils ready to do their evil work! "The fowls came," they had not far to fly. The birds know a sower by the very look of him, so they hurry up and come wherever the seed may be cast that they may devour it. O Lord, keep the fowls away or, better still, break up the soil so that the seed may enter and not lie upon the surface!

5. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth.* There was a pan of unbroken limestone an inch or two below the soil, but there was no depth of earth where the seeds could grow.

5. *And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.* They seemed to be converts, but they proved to be worthless. They were enthusiastic, carried away with excitement, but all was soon over with them "because they had no deepness of earth." Everything was superficial, there was no depth of character, or feeling, or emotion.

6. *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* [See Sermon #2844, Volume 49—THE SEED UPON A ROCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They seemed to be alive at the top, but they were really dead below. How many there still are of that sort—they make a bold profession, but it is only for a while—and then they wither away.

7, 8. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground*—Thank God we do not lose all our efforts! If one in four succeeds, it is great deal for which we ought to praise the Lord. So, brother, sister—

*“Sow in the morn your seed,
At eve hold not your hand.
To doubt and fear give you no heed,
Broadcast it over the land.”*

8. *And brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.* There are degrees even in fruitfulness—Christians are not all alike. Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing everywhere! We do not get it, and can scarcely expect it, but let us thank God if we have “some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

9-12. *Who has ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciple came and said unto Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.* [See Sermon #1488, Volume 25—MORE AND MORE, OR LESS AND LESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is so even in common things—the man of intelligence who has a good groundwork of education, picks up something everywhere—but the ignorant man learns nothing anywhere. He only finds out more and more of his own ignorance till there is taken away from him even that which he had. Oh, that the Lord would give us a good groundwork of saving knowledge so that we might go on learning more and more under the Holy Spirit’s teaching!

13-16. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is grown gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.* It is awful thing when God gives men up to spiritual blindness and dullness and hardness, but it does happen. If you hear the word and refuse to receive it, you do, to that extent, harden your heart. And if you continue to do so, you will by degrees lose the capacity for understanding the word. Take heed what you hear! O my dear hearers, I am afraid that many of you are not aware of the solemn responsibility of hearing the gospel and of the terrible peril of having your ears made dull and your heart made hard! I am responsible for preaching faithfully to you, but you are equally responsible for hearing what is preached. Let us not waste any opportunity that we have of hearing the word, but use it wisely and well that we may be able to give a good account of it before God in our fruitfulness.

Now, if the Savior’s main design, in the use of parables, had been that men should not understand Him, He could have answered that end better by not speaking at all. But see how mercy blends with justice, and gives them another opportunity of hearing the word. They might have come to Jesus even as His disciples did, and asked Him questions, and He would have explained the truth to them. If any of you today hear anything which you do not understand, go to the Lord about it in private prayer and He will explain it to you. I tremble lest any of you should hear the word and not receive it and yet be content! That is the worst state of all for anyone to be in! May God save you from it! But as for you who know the lord, “blessed are your eyes, for they see.” Those are blessed eyes that can really see. Eyes that cannot see are a trial, but “blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” It is nothing but the grace of

God that can make our ears spiritually hear. He that made the ear can alone make an open passage from the ear to the heart. If you have received this blessing, be very grateful for it, and bless the God of grace for giving it to you!

17. *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* To you Christian people, there is given a very full revelation of the truth of God. You live in the mid-day glory of the gospel, but the “prophets and righteous men” of old lived in the morning twilight. Be the more grateful and bless the Lord with all your hearts.

18, 19. *Hear you, therefore, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received the seed by the wayside.* There are many such hearers! They just hear the word and that is all. They are very much like the countryman who said that he liked Sunday, for it was such an easy day—he had nothing to do but go to church, put up his legs and think of nothing. There are far too many hearers of that sort who think of nothing and, therefore, they get no good out of what they hear.

20, 21. *But he that received the seed in the stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it, yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by-and-by he is offended.* He soon ceases even to profess to be a Christian! He jumped into religion and he jumps out again. Revival always produce a large quantity of such people, and yet, if there is one soul truly saved, the revival is a success as far as that one is concerned.

22, 23. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received seed in the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it.* Knows what it means, thinks it over, takes it in as the good ground takes in the seed and keeps it—

23. *Which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* I say again—oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing! Yet let us not forget to give God thanks if we have sixtyfold or even thirtyfold.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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