

Mark 4: 26-29; “The Ripe are Steadfast”, Session # 8 on the Parable of the Growing Seed, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 25th, 2022.

Mark 4: 26-29 – “And Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.” “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Review –

So far we have looked at the seed being planted, and putting forth a Blade, and then that blade, after a time puts forth a head of grain. We have also in recent sessions been thinking about the ripening of the grain, or how a Christian comes to greater maturity.

I. The Growth of the Christian Plant to Mature Ripeness in 7 Stages:

1. The Blade becomes a head of grain by practicing righteousness and loving the brethren.
2. The Full Head of Grain shows increasing ripeness which is Christian maturity.
3. Progress to Maturity will Ultimately Depend Upon What You Sow To.
4. Maturity in Regard to Bearing One Another’s Burdens.
5. Maturity in Becoming Like Christ in our Thoughts and Behavior by Learning to Bear Reproach.
6. Maturity in learning to give and receive Reproof.

7. Maturity in Perseverance and Steadfastness.

Romans 5: 1-5 – “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (endurance); and perseverance, character (approved character); and character, hope.” “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

The end aimed at by the Christian is the hope of the glory of God. That is that we will have eternal glory at the end of running our race of the Christian life. To persevere and to obtain this eternal glory, we must know that we are justified by faith in Christ. That we have peace with God, that we have access to Him continually by faith. We know that we stand in His grace, and we rejoice at the prospect of being with Christ and our great Triune God forever. Knowing these things, we also, then, glory in tribulations. (distresses, troubles that arise from persecutions) We think that tribulations are good for us because we know that they produce in us perseverance. And then as we persevere in faith and in doing what is right according to the Scriptures, real proven character is built in us. This approved Christian character leads to the solid grace and joy of hope. That is, we greatly desire after this eternal life with Christ and we expect that by Christ’s grace and our continuing to look to Him for it, we shall obtain all that we are seeking, according to what has been promised us in God’s word. This hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Faith, hope, and love are graces of the Spirit, which we work at exercising continually in every situation that we find ourselves in, and all of these graces have their focus upon Christ Himself; that we would become more and more like Him. We continue to confess Him to trust in Him, to hope in Him, and to love Him, and we are not disappointed.

Ephesians 6: 17 & 18 – “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

1st Thessalonians 5: 8 – “But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

These two scriptures go hand in hand as the 2nd one explains the first one better. The helmet of salvation is the hope of salvation. Once again, it is the desire to obtain heaven and eternal glory because of what Christ has done for us in His finished work of redemption and the Spirit’s help to us in our sanctification, our pursuit of righteousness and holiness. It is Christ’s finished work, and the Spirit’s application of the blessings and benefits, imparting these to us, that is a helmet that guards us in relation to the attacks of the evil one. We wield the sword of the Spirit, the word of God against these attacks and we are continually praying for the Lord’s help in the Spirit, to defeat the Devil in his schemes against us. We are watchful to this end with all perseverance; our continuing to resist him steadfast in our faith that he might flee from us. We also pray for all the saints in this same way.

1st 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 sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood 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.”

2nd Peter 3: 17 and 18 – “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” “To Him be the glory both now and forever.” “Amen.”

The saints need to be on their guard against falling from their own steadfastness, and being led away with the error of the wicked. To be steadfast is to be fast fixed, firm, firmly fixed or established in everything related to our faith, hope, love, and our perseverance in thinking and doing good and right things. We continue constant and resolute. We hold fast the truth, and persevere in faith, holiness, and righteousness by the grace of God which has been given them. They must consciously study to grow in that grace and in their knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May He have all the glory for all of our growth and whatever we are enabled to do by His grace, to obey and glorify God.

II. Christ Puts in the Sickle.

Christ putting in the Sickle in our Parable means His perceiving that we are ripe enough to be brought to heaven in the time of His choosing.

Mark 4: 28 & 29 – “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Now in these verses of this Parable there is a 3-fold meaning in relation to the harvest. One relates to every individual Christian personally. The 2nd relates to the preacher of the word. And the 3rd relates to the Church of our Lord itself at the time of His 2nd Coming.

Let’s take the individual Christian first.

a. When Christ puts in the Sickle, He is harvesting the whole life of the Christian.

Psalm 139: 16-18 – “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.” “And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” “*If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.”

I do not think that we reflect enough upon the fact that God, who is the Author of our life is the one who fashions all of our days for us, when as yet there were none of them. His thoughts towards us, over the course of our lifetime, the sum of them is very vast. More in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with you. I believe that this last statement refers not only to the fact that when I wake up every morning from my sleep, that I am still with God, but even when I lie down in death, when I die, I wake up in glory. My life has been reaped to God.