



[Matthew 13:18-23](#)

(18) "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. (20) But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. (22) Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (23) But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

New King James Version

So often, it is easy to let down in our thinking, assessing that, because we believe we are members of the church, we can relax in our conduct and spiritual growth. Perhaps we regard ourselves as automatically chosen, that we "have it made." That is dangerous thinking! Our emphasis, especially now as the times worsen, must be on working to make sure we are chosen.

The Parable of the Sower both warns and advises us on the course of our lives once we hear "the word of the kingdom" (verse 19). As Jesus explains, some never get beyond mere hearing of it, and Satan does his dirty work to keep them in the dark. These people, though technically called, will likely rise in the second resurrection, when they will be able to respond to [God](#) without Satan's interference.

In verses 20-21, Jesus describes those who receive God's Word "with joy," but they lack depth—their spiritual roots are so shallow that they are easily withered by adversity. Upon encountering their first trial, they fold like a cheap suitcase. For example, some, facing the prospect of losing a job because of keeping of the [Sabbath](#), rationalized that God would not want them to fail to support their families and so left the

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church, considering God's way to be too difficult.

Another group appears in verse 22: those in whom “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word.” Some among us in former days partook of a slice of success in this world, and their wealth and position eventually became more important to them than doing what God asks of His people. They, too, spurned their calling. We read of similar people in the Parable of the Wedding Feast, who declined the king's invitation to care for their farms or businesses.

Such a person becomes distracted by [the world](#) and chooses to prioritize God, not first, but further down the list. Because he does not spend time with God or thinking about His way, he stops growing. As Jesus puts it, “He becomes unfruitful” ([Matthew 13:22](#)). In other words, he quits producing the kind of character growth God wants to see in him. His transformation into the image of Christ comes to a standstill.

[Matthew 13:23](#) describes the group we must be in to be chosen: “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” The ones whom God commends are those who bear fruit. They do this by overcoming their old sinful natures, seen in the works of the flesh ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)), and growing in the traits of their Savior, seen in the [fruit of the Spirit](#) ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

This bearing of fruit is the requirement of being chosen, as Jesus explains in [John 15:1-8](#). Notice verses 1-2: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch that does not bear fruit He takes away [margin: *lifts up*; or *removes, cuts off*]; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” He ends the passage by saying, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (verse 8).

What happens when one of the called fails to bear fruit? In verse 6, Jesus expands on what He said in verse 2: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” The unfruitful branch's ultimate end is the Lake of Fire. We fail to produce spiritual fruit at our eternal peril!

The important question is “Now that we have been called, are we producing the fruit that glorifies God, transforming into the image of Jesus Christ?” ([Romans 12:2](#)). If we do this, we will indeed be among the chosen—the elect—and glorified with Christ.

— John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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