

Sunday, June 23, 2013

The sown word and the quality of the soil (6)

The Lord Jesus described the owner of the good ground that he:

1- Listens: This means that he takes heed and seizes every opportunity to place himself where the word of God is present, such as in liturgies, church meetings, revivals, or spiritual conventions. Or spends time watching Christian TV such as CTV, CYC, or Aghaby. Or visits Christian websites such as orthodoxsermons.org and the likes. He listens to recorded sermons at home or in the car. **He is thirsty for the divine word because he recognizes its value in his life, therefore, he searches for it everywhere.**

2- Accepts: Acceptance here means that the **owner of this land has a humble heart.** He feels that he is in need so he easily accepts the seed of the word in his life. He **Doesn't boast over the word** but absorbs it calmly and make a place for it in his heart, exactly like the soil absorbing water. In this regard, our teacher St. James the Apostle commands us: **"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."** (James 1:21).

3- Understands: understanding requires two important things: **effort from man and grace from God.** The **effort of man** is to **focus** on listening and not to be **shy in asking for explanation** for the intended meaning of the word and its depth. It is also an effort to **read** biblical interpretations and an effort in **prayer** so that God opens our minds as the psalmist pleaded to God saying: **"Give me understanding, and I shall live... Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."** (Psalm 119). Here the grace of God comes in to reveal the mystery of the word to man, as the Lord Jesus opened the hearts of the disciples to understand the books (Luke 24:45), the **grace of God always complements the efforts of man.**

Frankly, it gladdens my heart when someone asks me during confession about the meaning of a verse in the Bible, because it indicates that this person cares about understanding the commandments and tries to live by them.

4- Keeps: meaning that **his life is attached to the word,** he **obeys** it in his life and **keeps** it in his conduct, always places it before his eyes and walks in its light as St. Anthony said: **"For everything you do or say always have a verse from the scriptures."** Keeping could mean memorization **word-for-word** at least to some parts of the scriptures. This comes by reading and practicing memorization, everyone according to his/her ability. Our church fathers mastered keeping the word, we hear that St. Pishoy used to memorize the book of Jeremiah while others memorized the Gospel of John, the book of proverbs, revelations, or some epistles. The majority memorizes the book of psalms and recites it day and night. These types of people who keep [memorize] the scriptures are blessed by the Bible as it states: **"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"** (Luke 11:28), **"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."** (Revelations 1:3).

5- Patient: Patience is necessary for the roots of the word to grow in one's heart, without it we can't see fruits. We cannot possibly imagine that we can reach perfection the moment we plant the seed in the ground. Any plant needs time to grow. The Bible teaches us to be adorned with longsuffering until we get what we want, the book of James says: **"See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your heart."** (James 5:7-8).

6- Brings fruit: fruits are a **sign of life.** Having fruits in our lives reveals that the Holy Spirit is living within us. Fruits can **come quickly** when we practice what we hear and relate it to our daily lives until it becomes an integral part of our conduct. Or it can **take some time** and come with persistent prayers and be diligent in thoughts and conduct. In general, we should take heed in taking into our minds and hearts some of what we hear and try hard to live by it, as the Bible commands us: **"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."** (James 1:22).

7- Grows: Growing in fruition is endless, everyone according to tier diligence, strife, tier ability to respond to the word, and according to the work of grace in their lives, as the psalm says: **"Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy."** (Psalm 126:5). The word of God not only enriches the heart but it also enlarges it. When man feeds on the word of God and strives in conducting himself according to it, his heart becomes large and full of love, as the psalmist sings in the psalm: **"I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart."** (Psalm 119:32), When man has such a large heart, he chants saying: **"I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad."** (Psalm 119:96).

Now after we have finished studying the condition of the grounds of our hearts and its impact on the growth of the seeds of the word in our lives, we come to the other side of our discussion which is **the planted word or the type of seed.**

Fr. Yohanna Naseef
fryohanna@hotmail.com

(To be continued)

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL