

The importance of showing spiritual fruit by growing in the faith cannot be over emphasized. We should also know of the eventual results if there is no spiritual learning or growth. Jesus said that His Father, *"cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,"* (John 15:2). He also said that if we remain in Him we will bear fruit (5), *"apart from me you can do nothing."* If we do not keep following Him (and placing 100% of our trust in Him) our spiritual life can quickly wither. (6), *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."*

We are saved by grace, but we can *fall* from grace. We are also justified by faith, but our faith can cease to exist. We are not under law, but living by the sinful nature results in spiritual death. The Apostle Paul taught against legalism, but he also taught that no immoral, impure, greedy person or drunkard has any inheritance in God's kingdom.

We are not saved by works, but to reap eternal life we must sow to please the Spirit. If we please the sinful nature we will reap destruction. God is always faithful to us, but we must be faithful to Him to the very end of our lives to escape the lake of fire. God surely loves us, but those who inherit the kingdom love God (with all their heart, soul, and mind). To love God means to follow His commands. We have freedom in Christ, but this freedom does not give a license to sin.

True grace teaching says that eternal life is a hope (Titus 3:7), *"Having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."* Eternal life is yet to be reaped (Galatians 6:8), *"The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."*

The Apostle Paul (who is considered the N.T. grace teacher) wrote Ephesians 2:8-9. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."* He also wrote 1 Corinthians 9:27, *"I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."* A saved believer like the apostle, could not be *disqualified* for the kingdom if *once saved always saved* was true.

Jesus told a story in Luke 8 about four types of people who hear the Word. (Verses 5-8), *"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'"*

Verses 9-10, *"His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'*

Jesus interprets the parable. (11-13), *"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away."*

(14-15), *"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."*

Type A persons are *‘those along the path who hear, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.’* This person never came to saving faith because even though they heard the word, they did not believe the word. Those who give false grace teaching confuse the issue by saying if anyone falls away from the faith they were never saved in the first place. However, only this first [type A] person was never saved, because they are the only ones in this parable that never believed.

The second type B person is important to consider because there is much false teaching of unconditional eternal security that says a believer will always be a believer and they will always bring forth fruit. That is not what the Lord Jesus taught, however, and He gives many warnings about falling away (after once accepting the faith). Verse 13 is type B. *“Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.”*

One translation says they *‘have no lasting root’* which is a very clear translation because it leaves little room for misinterpretation. This second type did have a root because a plant sprung up from the seed (growth). They received God’s Word, they believed, and they had faith (which are all necessary for salvation), but after having faith and believing, they left the faith.

The Lord is telling us that there is a large group of people who hear the Word, who receive it, and who believe what they heard, but in a time of testing, temptation, or trial they fall away and no longer believe (nor have faith). This is God’s interpretation of the parable, so it is right.

False teachers often refer to Matthew 13 or Mark 4 when speaking on the parable of the sower because the wording of Luke 8 is difficult to twist. Eternal security teachers say that if people fall away, they never did believe, but Luke 8:13 refutes false doctrine by saying there are people who *‘believe for awhile’* but fail when their faith is tested.

Type B person believed and then stopped believing. They had genuine faith in Christ because plant life sprung up from the root. Plant life is referring to spiritual life, but something happened after the plant started to grow. It is serious because only by faith are we saved. If we let go of our faith, we are not saved. Matthew 13:21 says, *“When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.”*

Some type of persecution (or difficulty) was too much for them, which proved their faith to be spurious. They didn’t hold on to the Word, which is necessary to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:2). They did not hold firmly to the confidence they had at first (Hebrews 3:14) so would not share in Christ.

The very fact that they accepted God’s Word and wanted to live a godly life is what brought about the persecution in the first place. (2 Timothy 3:12), *“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* Type B person was putting God’s Word into practice and (as could be expected) persecution was met.

We will encounter trials, tests, and difficulties if we desire to follow Jesus. (Acts 14:22) The apostles, *‘Strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to remain true to the faith. ‘We must go through many hardships [afflictions WEY, tribulations [NKJ, NLT, Young’s Literal], & troubles TEV) to enter the kingdom of God,’ they said.’* Persecution because of our faith is to be expected. It is not something that just happens. *‘All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.’*

Persecution is not only being placed in prison or martyred for your faith. Jesus taught that there are various forms of persecution. He said (Luke 6:22-23), *“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because*

of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven." When Simon Peter was fearful of persecution (because of being associated with Christ) he denied the Master three times.

Type B person had spiritual life (which produced a plant), but when the test or persecution came, they fell. The plant would then, (if there is no repentance) wither and die. If there would be a plant growing in our garden and someone would say that the plant never had life in it, we would know that is untrue. It *is* a plant and it certainly *does* have life in it, because it is growing by taking nourishment through the root system.

As unbelievable as this may sound, that is the false grace teaching which is prevalent today. Type B person did have spiritual life because that life came from the Word of God which resulted in faith to believe. No one could die spiritually unless they first had spiritual life (which comes from our believing the Word).

Type A person did not have spiritual life because they did not accept the Word and did not believe, but type B did both, therefore the seed of the word grew and they had spiritual life for awhile. Tests of faith determine our sincerity for the Word. Jesus said (John 15:18), "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.*" Then in verses 20-21 He says, "*If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.*"

Unbelievers know who the *believers* are and they persecute them, exclude them, insult and ridicule them (just as Jesus said). (John 16:1), "*All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.*" In Greek *go astray* means *fall away*. Jesus is speaking to believers (not just professing Christians) and giving a warning that it is possible to go astray after hearing and accepting the Word.

2 Peter 2:9 says, "*The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment.*" According to this verse (and many others) there are only two types, the godly and the ungodly or the righteous and the unrighteous. The ungodly (with no faith) are heading toward the lake of fire, and the godly (with faith) are being persecuted as a test of their sincerity. In such times we must not fall away from the faith, but hold on to the faith (by the power of God's Spirit).

Titus 2:12-14 explains true grace. "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*"

Type C person in the parable (Luke 8:14) says, "*The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.*" This person fell away (not from persecution), but because of worldly pleasures, love for money, and wanting financial security. The thorns of the world can choke out the Word of God and prevent spiritual fruit.

Both type B & C person accepted the Word of God, but different things took place later that snatched the Word from their heart and prevented growth. John 15:2 says, "*He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.*" Putting God's Word into practice results in spiritual fruit, which is necessary (according to Jesus). If we do not bear fruit, we can quickly wither.

Jesus says His Father, "*cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.*" By saying *in me*, He means a believer who had accepted God's Word but later rejected the Word and bore

no fruit. (John 15:6), *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."*

A branch is not a branch unless it is first connected to the tree. It is our choice to remain in Christ and connected to the Vine (from which comes spiritual growth), or we can choose to leave the faith, let go of God's Word, and see no spiritual growth. There are only those who remain in Christ and those who do not. Jesus said (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23), *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters."* Spiritual growth and fruit is a salvation issue.

The person who remains on the Vine and holds steadfast in the faith for salvation is type D (Luke 8:15). *"The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."* Other translations say, *"Honest and good heart,"* or *"Having listened to the Message with open minds and in a right spirit, hold it fast, and patiently yield a return,"* (WEY).

Moses had to decide, and so do we. 'By faith he refused the world and chose to be mistreated along with God's people,' and we too must choose to be insulted, left out, and persecuted because of our love for Jesus, rather than enjoy the short-lived pleasures of sin. Knowing Christ and being found in Him is of far greater value than all the treasures this sin-cursed world has to offer. We must keep our faith in Jesus for the eternal reward to be received!

...

#671R 06 0505A