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GRACE**

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Mark 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Mark 4.

Topics.

- The parable of the sower.
- The parable of the rocky ground.
- The parable of the thorny ground.
- The parable of the good soil.
- Thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold.
- The parable of the lamp.
- The parable of the man scattering seed.
- The parable of the mustard seed.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on a Sabbath Day so the Pharisees seek to kill him. Jesus withdrew to the mountains and selected the twelve apostles and gave them authority to cast out demons. The scribes from Jerusalem accused Jesus of being possessed by demons and using the power of Beelzebub the chief of demons to heal the sick. The chapter ended with Jesus saying, whoever does the will of God are his mother, brothers and sisters.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MARK 4:1

Jesus teaches from a Boat.

Mark 4:1: Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea (of Galilee) on the land.

Parable: a parable is a short simple story that uses symbolic or fictitious narrative relating to common life that is intended to illustrate a moral or religious lesson. Jesus begins to teach by the seashore of the Sea of Galilee, but later climbs into a boat and teaches from the water most likely because the crowd had become so great that in the people's desire to see and touch him, he was being crowded in or even crushed.

MARK 4:2-9

The Parable of the Sower.

- **Mark 4:2-9:** And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹And he (Jesus) said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus gives the interpretation of this parable in the next few verses.

The Secret of the Kingdom of God.

- **Mark 4:10-12:** And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹²so that "they (those outside the Kingdom) may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Jesus words, "To you it is given", applies to Jesus disciples and those with him, they have been given the secret of the Kingdom of God because they accepted the Lord and follow him. "To you it is given" applies to everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to those outside the Kingdom of God who have no idea of the spiritual treasure that God has hidden in the heart of those who belong to and believe in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke in parables so that those whose heart was not right (i.e. full of self, ego and pride) would see his miracles hear his teaching but because their heart was not right they do not perceive who Christ is or understand his teaching, because if they did they would turn from their wicked ways repent and be forgiven.

- The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower.

MARK 4:13-15

Birds came and devoured the Word. (v3-4).

- **Mark 4:13-15:** And he (Jesus) said to them (those with him) "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them."

Jesus tells his disciple if they do not understand this parable, they will not understand any of the other parables so this is a key parable to understanding all other parables.

Interpretation of the birds and those on the path: the parable does not name the sower, but it immediately applies to Jesus who is at this very moment sowing the word, then by extension to all who go out to proclaim the word of God. The seed is the word of God and those on the path refers to people who are being witnessed to, they are listening to the Gospel and though they are not saved they are on the right path toward being saved, but as soon as they are in different circumstance or different company Satan comes and takes what they have heard and received away from them before it has time to take root in their heart and be established in their life.

SATAN: in the Hebrew and Greek language does not have a capital *S* and simply means an adversary, one who withstands, opposes or resists it is a word that has come to symbolize everything that is the total opposite to what is good, decent and right. In many verses of the Bible the word Satan is often personified as the arch enemy of God.

The New Testament: says the works of Satan are evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, a false witness, blasphemies, covetousness, wickedness, deceit and lasciviousness. Pride, foolishness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation's, wrath, strife, sedition's and heresies, envying, drunkenness, reveling, and such like. The Bible tells us all of these dwell in the human heart and that they are all the works of Satan, which shows us that Satan's dwelling place must be in the human heart therefore the word Satan is a personification of the evil

in the heart that influences a person's own lust, ego and pride etc., in rebellion against God or to act as an adversary to Christ and those who follow him, but the word Satan is not limited in its meaning to only religious matters, Satan in its widest and fullest sense is a personification of everything that is opposed to what is good, religious or secular, thus the universal title, the Arch enemy of good. This influence can be manifested through an individual, a group, a government or leaders of nations that act as an adversary and enemy to everything that is good, decent and right.

The evil one, the prince of the power of the air and the god of this world: John tells us that the whole world lives under the influence and power of the evil one and Paul says unbelievers follow the prince of the power of the air because the god of this world has blinded their minds. The titles, the evil one, the prince of the power of the air and the god of this world all refer to the same power and influence that affects the human mind, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, they are simply different titles for the same entity which personifies the evil that rises up out of the human heart and influences the world, this entity in most verses is called Satan or the devil (1 John 5:19) (2 Cor. 4:4) (Eph. 2:2). For further information see the following title:

- Satan in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The influence of Satan in the context of this parable could come through friends, family a romantic partner or marriage spouse that talks them out of believing and committing to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A practical application today: at some stage most Christians have probably taken a friend to their church, youth camp or a home group in which they were willing and open to listen to the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but sadly they did not commit to it and therefore fell away.

MARK 4:16-17

The Rocky Ground (v5-6).

- **Mark 4:16-17:** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

The rocky ground is a symbol of a heart that has no depth, the word does not penetrate and it's not taken seriously enough. It's that attitude that says, as long as I am getting some immediate benefit from this, I'll stick with it, but once the immediate benefit is gone, they move on to the next thing. The benefit in this parable is primarily the joy that comes with the promises of God's word.

A practical application today: a person can be in a Christian environment and get caught up with the emotion of the music, the joy of the peoples singing, the motivational message especially if it is promising prosperity and wealth and not only receive the word of the Lord, but actually endure for a while, nevertheless, they eventually fall away because they only responded for what they could get from God rather than wanting to know God. Like the many who came to Jesus for healing, but when he told them to be a disciple of his they needed to be prepared to lay down their lives for him they considered it too hard a saying and turned away.

MARK 4:18-19

The Thorny Ground (v7).

- **Mark 4:18-19:** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word,¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

These are people who hear the word they have been witnessed to but wealth and prosperity, the craving for the pleasures of this world, ambition, fame, or the desire to be having fun with their secular friends leaves them no time for God and eventually the stresses and cares of the world overtake them.

A practical application today: many hear the Gospel of the Lord, but because of their love for the material things of this world they put themselves into debt so large that they have to work long hours to finance the debt which means they barely have time to be with their own family let alone time to attend to the things of God.

MARK 4:20

The Good Soil (v8).

- **Mark 4:20:** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Good soil is the person who embraces the word and continues in it producing various measures of fruit.

Fruit in this is parable is any action that:

- Testifies to God's goodness and His name.
- Witnesses to the grace and mercy of God that is in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Helps to expand the Kingdom of God.
- Evidences a person's inward faith in Christ.

Fruit may be any of the following: proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, helping the poor and the less fortunate, doing good to others, giving up drugs, partying, swearing, anger, jealousy, bitterness, sexual adulteries and such like things or sacrificing leisure time to serve God and spend time with the Lord and His family.

Thirtyfold, Sixtyfold and a Hundredfold: carries the following two ideas:

1. It implies that not everyone is expected to produce the same (i.e. a person who has never learned music would not be expected to play to the standard of a skilled musician), thus in this context thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold means God judges according to a person's ability it means that God is thrilled with what a person does for the Lord no matter how small because He measures their efforts according to their ability, talents and gifts.
2. Thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold implies effort and a person's comment to the Lord's work and service. Some like Paul give up everything for the Lord, while others give to the Lord's service varying degrees of their time and labour, they offer what they are able. Not everyone is able to be a Paul or a Peter, but there should be some form of outward evidence that manifests the inward faith a person has in the Lord Jesus Christ.

MARK 4:21-23

The Parable of the Lamp.

- **Mark 4:21-23:** And he said to them (the twelve and those with them) (v10) "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²²For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

Nothing is hidden, refers to the Gospel message of grace and mercy. Jesus is saying it is not a secret message or just for a select group of people, the Good News, the Gospel of grace is to be like a lamp that is carried out into the darkness (world) and shines its light. Those who belong to the Lord are called to be like the light of the lamp which brightly shines in the darkness. They are not to be like a cult who keeps their messages bound up amongst themselves as though they were a privileged people who had insights into some secret code or special message, but rather to take the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

- All those who belong to Christ are his lamps among the darkness on the earth, we can be a bright lamp or a dim lamp, but we are all lamps.

MARK 4:24-25

With what Measure you Measure it will be Measured to You.

- **Mark 4:24-25:** And he said to them (the twelve and those around him) (v10) "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Jesus is saying to those with him to take heed to what they are hearing meaning embrace it and do something with it because according to whatever measure they act on it will determine the measure that more will be added to them. Meaning if they do nothing with what they hear nothing will be added to them, in fact they may even lose what they have, but if they act on what they hear more will be given to them. This is not implying that every Christian is required to have a degree in theology to please the Lord rather it simply means if those who belong to Christ act on the little, they have they will increase in the knowledge and love of God. "To the one who has," embraces the idea of doing something with what they already have whereas, "the one who has not" (meaning has very little) carries the idea of doing absolutely nothing with the very little they have. One is taking the lamp out from under the bed while the other is leaving it under a basket to be hidden.

With the Measure you use, it will be Measured to You.

- At the beginning of this parable Jesus has just told the disciples not to hide the Good News of the Gospel of grace and mercy under a basket or bed.

The phrase, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you," the key words are, use it, therefore this phrase means to what measure a Christian grants grace and mercy to others it will be measured to them, (i.e. the more grace and mercy given to others the more grace and mercy one will receive from God).

MARK 4:26-29

The Parable of a Man Scattering Seed.

- **Mark 4:26-29:** And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ⁷He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

This parable can apply to any person proclaiming the Gospel, the sower scatters the seed on the ground implies that he does not know what part of the ground will produce. The ground is a symbol of humanity no one knows who will respond to the Gospel so the word is proclaimed to all. Jesus is telling the twelve and those with him if they go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel message it will fall on all kinds of hearts, but when it falls on a good heart it will produce of itself because it is the Gospel message of God's love mercy and grace sown in a receptive heart that produces the growth.

Spiritual growth is a process: first the blade meaning a small outward action or evidence that spiritual life exist inside a person, secondly the ear meaning that the small outward action has now become very definite and solid evidence that the life of Jesus Christ is existing in the heart of the believer and thirdly the harvest applying to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords to gather those who belong to him to himself and establish God's Kingdom of righteous, justice joy and peace on earth.

MARK 4:30-32

The Parable of a Mustard Seed.

- **Mark 4:30-32:** And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

These three verses cover a massive expanse of time; the smallest of seeds is symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ coming with the message of grace and mercy. Now over a period of two-thousand years plus years that tiny message has grown into an enormous spiritual kingdom on earth today. The message of eternal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has become a shelter and protection to all sinners who believe it, but the ultimate fulfilment or climax of the tiny seed that was sown by the Lord Jesus Christ will be at his return and the resurrection when all those who have died in Christ and who are alive in God's Kingdom on earth will be resurrected, changed and gathered to be with Christ forever. They will be kings and priests working with him to establish God's literal Kingdom of justice, righteousness, joy and peace on earth during his millennial Kingdom reign. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

MARK 4:33-34

With many such Parables the Lord Spoke the Word.

- **Mark 4:33-34:** With many such parables he spoke the word to them (the crowd) (v36) as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

As they were able to hear it implies that Jesus directed his message to those that were willing to listen, he did not force or impose his message on to others rather the Lord invites sinners into the Kingdom of God and

fellowship with Christ. Christ paid an enormous price to open the door that all could enter into God's Kingdom, because of this to be invited into it is a privilege and should never be imposed or forced upon others. Whoever accept the invitation will be welcomed into the Lord's family, but if they refuse, they will remain on the outside, but this is their choice all the sower can do is give out the invitations.

The greatest gift: Jesus Christ is the greatest treasure any man or woman can have, those proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ should see themselves as offering the lost eternal life, there is no greater gift. Nevertheless, we are not called to force it on those who do not want it even God will never force or impose Himself onto others. God has given all mankind free choice and an open invitation to follow him or go their own way.

To his own disciples Jesus explained everything: (v34). In John's Gospel Jesus says to those who faithfully follow him, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15). A friend tells their friends everything this is the relationship the Lord wants to have with those who belong to him.

MARK 4:35-41

Jesus Calms the Wind and the Storm.

- **Mark 4:35-41:** On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." (Of the Sea of Galilee) ³⁶And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

NOTICE: other boats were following him and the disciples, Jesus could not even escape the crowds by sailing to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This story shows how exhausted Jesus was, he had been totally given to healing the crowds and teaching the disciples, at times the crowds were so great he had no time to eat or rest and now finally he gets a little solitude in a boat and goes to sleep.

Ponder for a moment: the disciples shock and amazement when Jesus enabled with the Spirit of God simply speaks to this wild storm and in an instant, there is calm, they are stunned.

Do you still have no faith? When Jesus asked the disciples, "Why are they so afraid have they still no faith?" he was not implying that they should have known he could calm the storm, they could not have been expected to know that he was able to calm raging winds and wild seas simply by speaking to them since they had never seen a miracle like this before, rather he was saying, do they still not understand that he is:

- The prophet to come like Moses.
- The Holy One to come that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of.
- The promised seed of Abraham and offspring of David.
- The Son of God.

- Israel's Messiah and Saviour of the world.

The disciples said to him do you not care that we are perishing?" They should have understood who Jesus was and that he did care about their well-being. Jesus is basically saying, "After all that they have seen and heard do they still not understand who he is." Jesus statement:

- Do you still have no faith?

Almost seems to be an expression of absolute astonishment that the disciples are still without understanding of who he is. After this overwhelming and stunning experience, the disciples are really in awe of this man they have in their boat. Up to now they believed Jesus was a great teacher and prophet probably like Moses or Elijah, but now they have literally seen him speak to a wild storm and raging waves and literally see that his words immediately calms the raging Sea of Galilee and the wild winds.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace