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The Sower Sows the Word

989-A

Series: Let God Be God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Sower Sows the Word

You probably have never thought of yourself as a farmer. Perhaps you have never seen a tractor, never touched a bale of hay, or never participated in a harvest. You may have trouble *telling the lettuce from the cabbage* in the supermarket, and you may start to sneeze just thinking of walking through a field of grain. You may be the city-slicker personified; but, Beloved, you are a farmer, whether you know it or not.

The closest to the country you may have ever gotten is to stop at a MacDonal'd's in a small town on the way from one big city to another. I don't know. But *the day you became a Christian*, you became at least two things: You became a fisherman, and you became a farmer. As a fisherman, you have been commissioned to fish for men; and as a farmer, you have been set apart to sow, to plant, and to water the crop a loving God has assigned to you. You may be ignorant like me, and think irrigation is a skin rash; or that an ant farm is a place in the country where your uncle's wife lives...I don't know. But you are a farmer, nonetheless. Jesus made it painfully clear that our ignorance of the principles of sowing and reaping in the physical realm will not exempt us from the task of putting on our spiritual overalls, setting the alarm clock for sunup, and heading for the pasture to lay into the soil the seed assigned to us.

It is that responsibility that we will address in this lesson, the responsibility of sowing the seed. We may not heed it, but I believe it is imperative that we hear it. For the church of Jesus Christ in this age, perhaps more than in *any other*, *has become a warehouse* of storage tanks receiving and holding more and more precious grain. Many of us have forgotten that we are not called to be storage tanks, but sowers. We have not been called to see how much grain we can hold, but how many crops we can grow. The seed must be sown or it will rot. You and I must take what we receive and pour it into the mouths of a dying world, or we will rot as well.

And so we move on to part two of our *look at the parable of the seed*. Jesus has just settled the bustling crowd into a seaside

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sanctuary and, sitting on a boat once again, He begins to address the searching throng; only this time, He addresses them in parables. He begins weaving stories for them, tales of common, everyday occurrences, almost childlike in their content; so simple, in fact, that the untrained ear heard only elementary principles, hardly worthy of this One who claimed to be the Living God.

But there were others in that crowd. There were those who had ears to hear. There were those who had received a heart transplant, and who now possessed the capacity to perceive things eternal. To them, these same simple stories unlocked the treasures of the kingdom; they opened a rich storehouse of spiritual insight that would have amazed the prophets of old. Same stories...different ears.

And the Master now explains that it will be His policy in the future to teach this way. His plan would be for God to spend the bulk of the rest of His time on planet earth telling stories...simple, childlike stories, stories that would go right over the heads of the unregenerate; but stories that would reach into the inner heart of hearts of God's man or woman and unleash the secrets of the King's world. Parables He called them. Tales cast alongside to illustrate dynamic, transforming spiritual truths by relating tangible, physical realities.

As usual, the disciples were confused. They not only didn't understand His primary parable, they didn't understand why He was speaking in parables. They had come for a lesson in heavy doctrine, and instead had been treated to the kind of story you would expect to hear in a third-grade Sunday school class at the First Jerusalem Evangelical Church. They were not so much offended as confused. So they asked the Master those two revealing questions. They asked:

³What does this parable mean? And ¹why are you speaking in parables to them? (¹Matthew 13:10; ³Luke 8:9,10 TLOCIS)¹

Jesus answered them by telling them that it had been given to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. To those who were *outside*, it had not been given. He was speaking in parables so that these others would see, but not perceive; hear, but not understand. Then Jesus graciously explained, point for point, the parable He had just given them. Let's read that parable again; then let's begin to look once again at the Master's explanation.

¹ The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Speak in Harmony; by Johnston M. Cheney; © 1969 Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

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² “Hearken! Lo, the sower went forth to sow ³his seed. ²And it came to pass as he sowed, that some fell upon the roadside; ³and it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ²came and devoured it. ¹And some fell on the rocky places, ²where it had not much earth: and it sprouted up at once, as it had no depth of earth, but when the sun rose, it was scorched, and because it had no root ³and lacked moisture, it withered away. And some fell into the midst of the thorns; and thorns sprang up with it and choked it, ²and it produced no returns. But some fell into the *good* soil; and growing up and increasing, it brought forth results, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some a hundred fold. ³And when He had said these things, he exclaimed ²to them, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*”

(Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:1b-9; Luke 8:4c-8 TLOCIS)

That is the parable itself. In our last lesson, we began looking at our Lord’s explanation of it, knowing that He was doing more than explaining one parable. He was giving us a pattern to understanding *all the parables!* Listen:

²Then said he to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹Hear therefore the parable of the sower; ³the message of the parable is this:

“The seed is the Word of God; the sower is sowing the Word.”

(¹Matthew 13:18-23; ²Mark 4:13-20; ³Luke 8:9,10 TLOCIS)

In our last lesson we looked briefly at that first phrase, “The seed is the Word of God”, and reminded ourselves that the life is in the seed; the growth is in the seed; and the seed is the Word. Therefore, for our lives to be effective, for our witness to be effective, for our growth to be evident, we must spend our lives in the Word of God. Nothing else will convict us; nothing else will comfort us; nothing else will encourage us except the Word of God.

The seed is the Word. That was the Master’s first penetrating comment on His own parable. The seed is the Word. Without it, it simply doesn’t matter how hard the soil is or even how thorny. Without the seed nothing will grow, regardless of the soil, the sun, or the circumstances. The Seed is the Word.

In this lesson we look at the second statement Jesus made. It followed closely on the heels of the first. He said this: “The Sower Sows the Word.”

That is the title for this study, as well. We will outline it this way:

The Sower Sows the Word

I- The Sower Knows the Word

- A- Its Preciousness
- B- Its Purity
- C- Its Power
- D- Its Permanence

II- The Sower Sows the Word

- A- Without Wavering
- B- Without Compromising
- C- Without Complaining
- D- Without Doubting
- E- Without Glorifying

I- THE SOWER KNOWS THE WORD

We are dealing here with an intelligent farmer, a farmer who has been instructed in the art of planting seeds. In fact, that is what this parable is all about; it is an agricultural manual for fledgling farm boys who are just starting out on the pathway to spiritual success. It is a step-by-step syllabus on what to do and what not to do to grow a good crop. It is an illustrated manual; illustrated by the priceless pen of the Holy Spirit, who paints pictures with words to demonstrate principles.

By using the Biblical exhortations on sowing literal seed, and making the spiritual switch, and by taking the actual Scriptural admonitions on sowing the Word itself, we will attempt to construct a mini-framework around this all-important subject of sowing.

We will begin by understanding that, while the Master sower is God Himself, *the sower He uses to sow the seeds is you*. It is me. It is *anyone who possesses the seed of the Word; and the more of the Word you possess in your heart, the more responsible you are to sow*. You and I are the farmers in the story. Isaiah 55, II Corinthians 9, and other passages make it clear that God provides the seed, and God feeds the sower with the same seed He asks the sower to sow; but the seed is actually passed on to a hungry world by those He appoints to do so. Scripture also makes it clear that everyone, to some degree, is responsible to sow the seed. So you are a farmer. Read the manual. Memorize the syllabus. It will clearly outline your task and mine. We are sowers. And the sower sows the Word!

Now no intelligent farmer will plant a field without knowing His seed. No farmer in his right mind would simply grab a handful

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of seed, walk out into the pasture and dump them, hoping some of them contained the kind of plant he wanted to grow. The farmer knows His seed. Do you? Do you realize just what it is you hold in your hand, when you hold in your hand the Word of God? The sower knows the seed.

A- The sower knows its preciousness

Do you realize the preciousness, the pricelessness, of what you have to plant? Isaiah 66 tells us what kind of farmer God is looking for:

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.
(Isaiah 66:1,2)

The man who knows the value of what He possesses *trembles* in the presence of the Word of God. Not in fright, but in awe. Suppose God gave you a handful of gold and asked you to go out in a field and cast it into the ground, and promised to take those priceless grains of gold and multiply them into mountains of treasures, would you not be in awe? Then why aren't you? That Bible you hold in your hand, those Scriptures you hold in your heart, represent something God says is far more valuable than the purest of gold. Yet we take it so for granted; we hear so much of it, see so much of it, have so much of it; we treat it like bird seed! This Bible we hold in our hands is priceless! The Word of God is precious! Sow it accordingly.

B- The sower knows the purity of the seed.

Not only is the seed you possess precious; it is pure. Proverbs makes this astounding statement about the seed:

Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Do not add to His Words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.
(Proverbs 30:5,6 NKJV)

The seed you hold in your hand is a pure seed. It contains no foreign material. It needs no extra fertilizer to make it grow. Bottles of super-charged emotionalism aren't needed. Spray cans of philosophy are not needed to ward off its enemies. The Word of God is a pure Word. Anything you add to it takes from it. Anything

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you take from it takes from it its power. The Word is pure. It stands alone. It doesn't need your commentaries or your illustrations to have power. You can simply read it; sit down and meditate on it, and the Spirit of God can unleash in your presence all of the wisdom of the ages. The seed is pure. Sow it accordingly.

C- The sower knows the power of the seed.

The Word you hold in your hand and in your heart has more power than ten trillion hydrogen bombs. That's why you need not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains crumble into the depths of the sea. "The Word of God is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." God's Word went forth, and the heavens were created. God's Word went forth, and the seas rushed to the edge of the shore. God's Word went forth, and it was as though time stood still, and the seas stopped...and could go no further. God's Word went forth and nations crumbled. God's Word went forth and oceans parted; rocks gave forth water; armies perished; kings became paupers; paupers became kings. My friend, let's stop talking about how busy the devil is, how powerful the devil is, how clever the devil is. Let's stop talking about the devil, period. Beloved, the devil trembles at the Word of God. You have a sword that causes him to flee. Use it. The seed you hold in your hand and in your heart is a powerful seed. Live like it!

D- Finally, the sower knows the permanence of the seed.

Isaiah 40:8 reminds us, "The grass withers; the flower fades; but the word of our God abides forever." Everything else you do in this life will pass away. Everything else you own in this life will pass away. Everything else you give in this life will pass away. But every seed you sow will live forever. Every syllable of His Word is eternal. It *cannot* pass away. So what are you going to give your life to? That which in a moment will vanish into smoke? Or that which will turn into eternal treasure in the heavenlies and last forever and ever? Sow the seed. It is the only thing you will do that will never die.

II- THE SOWER SOWS THE WORD

The wise sower knows his seed. He knows it is priceless. He knows it is pure. He knows it is powerful. He knows it is permanent. He knows. So the sower who knows...sows. He cannot keep for himself anything so precious, so pure, so powerful, so

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permanent. The sower sows the Word of God. He literally gives his life to sharing the Scriptures. That's what he lives for; and as he does it, at least five things are evident.

1- He sows it without wavering. He never stops. Paul gave Timothy this powerful instruction in II Timothy 4:2a. He said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;" In other words, sow the seed, Timothy, whether it seems convenient or not; whether it seems easy or not; whether it seems appreciated or not. In II Corinthians 5 Paul gave us our marching orders. He said this:

...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
(II Corinthians 5:19,20)

You and I are ambassadors on duty for the King. An ambassador has a job to do. He is to stay at his post whether the winds of fortune blow his way or not. He may be a hero in the land to which he is sent; or he may be a martyr. The issue is not which he becomes. The issue is whether or not he stays at his post and does what he is called to do. You and I have been called to minister the word of reconciliation. Not just when it's easy; not just when it's received with appreciation; not just when the tides of evangelism are rushing our way. We are ambassadors, regardless. And our task is to sow the seed faithfully.

2- He sows it without compromising. In Deuteronomy 22 we read this unusual commandment:

Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.
(Deuteronomy 22:9)

It goes on to remind the Israelite not to "plow with an oxen and a donkey together". The law of unequal yoking. It is illuminated in II Corinthians 6, where Paul filled in the blanks and explained that you cannot yoke together God's people and the world's; or God's principles and the world's. The seed you sow must not be mixed with the philosophies of this world. Beloved, *trust the Word of God*. You need nothing else. Do not add to it. Know the Word. It is pure. Then sow the Word without apology, without compromise, without diluting it with the contaminated water that flows from

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the heart of the curse. The wise sower sows without compromise.

3- He sows it without regard to circumstances, without complaining. You may be in the midst of the greatest struggle of your Christian life. You may fall asleep at night bathed in tears of discouragement and pain. And you may be saying, "How could God use me at a time like this?" I'll tell you how: He will honor His Word. Use it. And the very process of using it will turn around and bless your life and lift you above your circumstances into the heavenlies. Listen to these verses from Psalm 126,

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.
(Psalm 126:5,6)

When life seems to be dealing you the bitterest of blows, don't yield to the god of this world and begin complaining. Yield to the God of eternity, and though your tears may soak the seed; sow the seed nonetheless. Even when your spirits are down, the Word will not have changed. God will honor His Word; it will not return void. When your heart is breaking, sow the Word. When your world is crumbling, sow the Word. When your prayers seem to go no higher than the ceiling, sow the Word. Like a heavenly boomerang, it will fill the skies with precious power, and the fruit of the Word will flow back into your life, drying your tears with the towel of victory; and you will come again rejoicing. God's man or woman sows the seed no matter what. And God blesses and blesses and blesses. *He offers seed to the sower and bread to the eater...*

4- He sows it without doubting. His is a confident spirit, even *when he sees no results.* Ecclesiastes says this:

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.
(Ecclesiastes 11:6)

You can't measure the results. You weren't called to. The one thing you were called to do is sow the seed. In the morning, sow the seed. In the evening, sow the seed. You don't know if either or both will bear visible fruit. It doesn't matter. Sow the seed, and sow it confidently by faith.

5- He sows it without glorying. In Mark 4, Jesus said this:

So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

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And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

(Mark 4:26-28)

And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

(Mark 4:30-32)

Thus Paul reminded us in I Corinthians 3:6,7:

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

As long as your confidence is in the seed, Beloved, and the one who causes it to grow, you can sow with confidence. The moment you come to believe, *even to the slightest degree* that some of the glory belongs to the one who sowed, or the one who watered; you have robbed the God of eternity of His rightful glory and lost the joy of laying up treasures in heaven. The sower is nothing. God is everything. Never forget it. Never forgetting it is what will keep your seeds growing.

So the godly sower knows the seed. He knows it is precious. He knows it is pure. He knows it is powerful. He knows it is permanent. And the godly sower sows the seed. He sows it without wavering, without compromising, without complaining, without doubting, without glorying. But, Beloved, above all, He sows the seed. He knows that it was not entrusted to him for him to start a seed museum, put it in bottles, label the bottles, and have guided tours every Sunday, so the intellectual debaters could pass by and admire their collections of seeds.

The seeds were meant to be sown.

...Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

(John 12:24)

And except you take that treasure house of knowledge you are accumulating and walk through the highways and byways of your

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world sowing the seed, it will become rancid. It will lose its appeal. It will lose its power. It will lose its life.

God may be calling you to teach. God may be calling you to a new witnessing venture. He may be calling you to an intensive discipleship relationship where you pour your heart and the Word that's engraved there into another's life and watch it grow. I do not know. But I know one thing God is not calling you to do. He is not calling you to become a seed collector, but to be a seed sower. And there is a lot of difference.

Some of you know so much of the Word you could open your own seminary tomorrow. You've played sit 'n soak so long you've forgotten why you were sitting and what you were soaking in. You can, you know, go to school so long that your career becomes learning and you never use what you've learned. It's easier than taking what you've learned into the real world and making it work; so you find new excuses to stay in school.

Christians do that, too. We love the comfortable confines of the Sunday School or the worship service or the Bible study group. We love our Sunday mount of transfigurations so much we try to build three tabernacles and stay. And we somehow expect a world that is lost and spiritually hungry to come pounding on our doors, begging us to let them come in and taste the delicacies we are so enjoying.

Sowers don't do that. Sowers sow the Word. They take it into the marketplace. They take it into the neighborhoods. They take it into the mission fields. They love it. They live it. They tell it. They share it. "They are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ...for they know it is the power of God to them who believe."

Day after day they sow the seed. Week after week they sow the seed. Year after year they sow the seed. Some may fall by the wayside, but they sow the seed. Some may fall on rocky soil, but they sow the seed. Some may fall in thorny soil, but they sow the seed because they know some *will fall into ground that is thirsty and waiting, just waiting for the seeds to fall.*

There are fields, Beloved, that are already ripe unto harvest. And there are fields that are simply waiting, starving, thirsting, for the seed of life. All they are waiting for is for a sower to sow the Word. Perhaps it is time that some of us stopped clutching the seed, or storing the seed, and simply began to sow the seed. I believe the God who gives the increase will be pleased if we do.

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For Study and Application

1- Be sure you know the Word

a) Know how precious it is: Do you tremble at the presence of the Word of God? Or have you come to take it so lightly that you no longer are stricken with awe at its reading? Why not take a day this week and spend that day re-establishing the place of the Word in your life. Meditate on Isaiah 66:1,2. Spend some time worshipping God just for giving you His Word. Spend some time with your family discussing the miracle of possessing the *actual Word of the Living God*. Pray for the people in countries around the world that are forbidden from having copies of the Scriptures. Ask God to forgive you for taking it lightly.

b) Remind yourself how powerful it is. Do a study, using a concordance, of all the things that happened when God spoke; or His word went forth. Write a letter to God thanking Him for the confidence you have living in a world that offers no security, because *nothing can overpower His word*.

2- Be sure you sow the Word.

a) What does it take to keep you from sharing Christ with others? How does your faithfulness to the Word differ from Paul's? Why? Would you be more faithful if you were about to see the Word taken from you? Why is it Christians in Russia risk their lives to share the Word, and we, who have nothing to lose, so often say nothing?

b) Why are so many adding to the Word today? Were we warned that this would happen? How can we be sure not to do the same?

c) Why are times of suffering some of the most necessary times for sharing the Word? What steps can you take to assure your faithfulness no matter the circumstances?

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