

The Kingdom of God

Part 1

Speaker	J.S. Blackburn
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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] I would like to read a portion from Matthew's Gospel chapter 13 verse 3 Matthew's Gospel chapter 13 verse 3 and he spake many things unto them in parables saying behold a sower went forth to sow and when he sowed some seeds fell by the wayside and the fowls came and devoured them up some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth and when the Sun was up they were scorched and because they had no root they withered away and some fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up and choked them and other fell into good [00:01:02] ground and brought forth fruit some a hundredfold some sixtyfold some thirtyfold who hath ears to hear let him hear and the disciples came and said unto him why speakest thou unto them in parables he answered and said unto them because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given for whosoever hath to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that he hath therefore speak I to them in parables because they seeing see not and hearing they hear not neither do they understand for in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias which says by hearing he shall hear and shall not understand [00:02:05] and seeing he shall see and shall not perceive for these this people's heart is wax gross and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and shall be converted and I should heal them but blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them here either for the parable of the son when anyone hear us the word of the kingdom and understand of it not then come us the wicked one and catches away at which they were sown in his heart this is he [00:03:08] which received seed by the wayside but he that received the seed into stony places the same is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it yet hath he not root in himself but dureth for a while for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word by and by he is offended but also he received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becometh unfruitful but he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understand of it which also bear of fruit and bringeth forth some [00:04:03] and hundredfold some sixty some thirty now it's my purpose to speak a little this evening on the subject of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven I give you a fair warning that for our purposes tonight I'm going to assume that those two expressions are practically synonymous they so often occur in exactly the same context that they must be very closely connected with each other I'm very well aware that very many believers in reading the passage like this will be very much disposed to say ah the gospel it's not for me and fold up your hands and if not go to sleep generate be quite prepared that it has nothing to say to you in particular and [00:05:03] to me about the end of the 16th

century there was in the Cathedral at Pisa some kind of service proceeding when doubtless by homily or missile or breviary the Word of God was being preached but to one person in the audience all this was nothing the young Galileo was absolutely concentrated as many a boy has been before or since on such a thing upon the fact that the great brass lantern hanging from the room was swinging but he was doing more than simply watching this he was carrying out a most detailed examination using his pulse as a clock he was timing the swings and he found to his surprise that independent of the length of the swings the rate of swing was [00:06:03] always the same for that particular lamp in other words he had made one of the great moves in science he had discovered the principle of the pendulum but what about the homily what about the Word of God so far as he was concerned his was a stony heart and it was all nothing to him now I'm speaking this evening from a very profound conviction that the parable of the sower has at least as much to say to you and me whenever we hear the Word of God as it has to say to the unconverted sinner I can see myself so often in this stony ground upon which the word falls and it never enters and Satan is busy taking away the word and then the other parts of the parable I can even more strongly see myself and see a warning and see light shining on so many things that perplex us as the [00:07:06] saints of God and will cast divine light upon them and will be for our help. Now I'd like to begin by asking you to consider the episode that we have you don't need to turn to it just leave your Bibles where they are in the 12th chapter of the Gospel of Luke when we're told that a certain man of the company said to the Lord Jesus master speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. Now this is a very contemporary question it's hardly possible to think of a more contemporary question than this in some form or other it dominates today the lives of nations there is so much wealth so much cake and to maximize [00:08:08] that is an industrial and commercial problem but then it has to be divided amongst the people and to do this is a political and social problem but that problem is exactly the problem we have here everybody says and it lies behind every strike in every land every man says I want a bigger share for myself now that very problem which confronts the world today was put to the Lord Jesus Christ by this man master speak to my brother then I get a better share and I charge you to notice the Lord Jesus Christ implies the answer to the question man I am NOT here to settle such problems not yet we have to put in the words not yet because we know that the time has come when the government [00:09:03] will be upon his shoulder and the nation shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and every man will sit under his own vine tree and these problems will be solved but the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to this man I'm not here to solve these problems not yet and he gives to the crowds the lesson that of the man who pulled down his barns and built greater he said to them drawing the lesson a man's life consisteth not consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesses but he then had a lesson for the disciples having said that he then said he said under disciples therefore I say unto you take no thought for your life in other words the disciples had needs of a material kind for this life and the Lord Jesus says I [00:10:02] want you to be absolutely without anxiety about those things these form a projects that the nations of the world seek after these form all the disputes that we know around us today the Lord said I want you to be absolutely at peace and delivered completely from anxiety about these things why because your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things but in the end he brings the conclusion to the disciples when he says to them seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you verse 31 rather seek ye the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you and in the Gospel of Matthew the words occur in this form seek ye first the kingdom of God now no one can possibly dispute with me that those words present in a very striking form the disciples priority seek ye first the kingdom of [00:11:08] God and all these things will be added unto you I want you to let me read you a few extracts as I go on from words that I've written myself some time ago but I'm anxious to preserve the words and on this particular subject in this context to seek something is to toil and so for it and the all-embrative object of the Christians toil is the kingdom of God in all the terms in which the

Christians priorities are stated perhaps this is the most important fundamental and abrasive seek ye first the kingdom of God the kingdom of God is the Christians first priority into this enterprise he is to pour the first of his prayers the [00:12:06] finest of his energies and the best of his time it is indeed worthwhile to inquire what is this kingdom which looms so large in terms of practical life and is to this question that I'd now like to turn it is obviously necessary for us to understand what is the kingdom of God when we're told so carefully that we should seek it now the kingdom of God is not something which passes away in its importance with the Gospels we hardly to be told that the kingdom of God is a principal subject some might say the principal subject of the Gospels if we were to take the Gospel of Matthew then there are three long discourses beginning with chapter 5 to chapter 7 we have that long discourse in which the Lord Jesus [00:13:01] Christ lays down the laws and the principles of his kingdom in the discourse of which we read part in chapter 13 he is giving the history of that kingdom from his first coming to his second coming during all that period he gives for the very first time the account of how his kingdom would develop and then in the last discourse in chapters 24 and 25 we have the story of his kingdom relative to the future and his second coming and how it will affect the Jew and the Gentile and the Church of God but when we pursue the story beyond this we find that the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection in speaking to the disciples 40 days it says he spoke to them 40 days of the things concerning the kingdom of God we read of the Apostle Paul when he was [00:14:03] carrying out his great work at Ephesus we're told that he had four subjects of discourse now first of all the subject of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ there was secondly the gospel of the grace of God but thirdly there was the kingdom of God he went amongst them preaching the kingdom of God and a little later he had not hesitated to declare onto them the whole counsel of God so in that great work in Ephesus one of the four principal themes that occupied him was the kingdom of God when the Apostle Paul gathered the Jews around him as we read in the last chapter it says he stayed there for two whole years speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God now I hardly need to tell you that there are scattered through the epistles several very searching and important little passages about the kingdom of God [00:15:07] one kind of passage tells us what is the kingdom of God such as the one in Romans 14 the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Ghost some passages tell us that if we behave ourselves badly we shall not inherit the kingdom of God and some passages tell us what are those kinds of activity which forward and set on the kingdom of God now it's my conviction that generally speaking in our thought and in our reading and in our ministry the kingdom of God does not appear to have the place it has in scripture we don't seem quite to give it the place in our thoughts and in our teaching that it has in scripture and it's in order to say something along [00:16:02] this line that I've read this passage about the parable of the sower now in asking the question what is the kingdom of God I would like to read a few other passages I'll simply read them there are two of them once again in the gospel of Luke because one immediately finds in speaking about the kingdom of God that there are several misapprehensions one of the popular ideas about the kingdom of God is that there has always been a kingdom of God from the beginning it's always been in existence through Holy Scripture it isn't very long since there was a book published called the kingdom of God and it was a compendium of the whole of Bible truth and that's a very general idea that God has always been a king therefore the kingdom of God must always have been in existence now we can [00:17:03] see that this is absolutely excluded as a possibility by certain patches of scripture as deal with this matter the first is in Luke chapter 7 and the Lord Jesus Christ said regarding John the Baptist among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he now there's an absolutely categorical statement that no person before John the Baptist was in the kingdom of God you know it's not possible to understand it in any other way the kingdom of God had no existence except in promise prior to New Testament times and in a later passage we read a similar statement relative to John chapter 16 verse 16 the law and the

prophets were until John since that time [00:18:04] the kingdom of God is preached and every man presses into it in other words the law and the prophets up to John the Baptist and there was not a kingdom of God until John the Baptist came now to begin a positive answer to the question as to what is the kingdom of God I'm going to read a very important verse in the beginning of Mark I'm turning over rather rapidly you don't need to turn because I'll read these short passages to you in Mark chapter 1 verses 14 and 15 we'll read at the beginning of the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ now after that John was put in prison Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent ye and believe the gospel now there are three very important things [00:19:09] about that statement of the evangelist the first thing is that the kingdom of God is a gospel the kingdom of God is a gospel and I'm going to show to you from the scriptures that the prime meaning of the kingdom of God is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to reign the prime meaning of the kingdom of God is the Millennium well what better news could there be for this sin sick world this weary sad world turned into a graveyard what news could there be to compare with this news that the time is going to come when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule when the Son of Righteousness he will rise with healing in his wings and the desert will blossom as a rose and every crooked will [00:20:02] be put straight and every rough place smooth aren't those lovely words the crooked straight if there's one thing that society howls out for today is that just somebody wants to put the crooked straight the crooked will never be put straight until Jesus comes then the crooked will be put straight and the rough places will be made smooth is it not wonderful news if rightly understood that there is going to be a kingdom of God the second point about the statement of the evangelist here is that the time is fulfilled now that clearly implies that time was to have begun at some previous period and at the time the Lord Jesus Christ began to preach that time was expired and since the time was [00:21:03] fulfilled it says the kingdom of God is near you the kingdom of God is at hand the kingdom of God is here now where would we find the start in the Old Testament scriptures where would we find the start of this period which was to be fulfilled well I think I would like you to hear me read from Daniel chapter 2 and I'll be making a few references but I'm really concentrating on verse 44 this is the very familiar story of Daniel's image and if I were to read it through to you you might very well conclude it's the story of the kingdoms there's the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors there's the kingdom of silver there's the kingdom of brass there's the kingdom of iron but [00:22:03] succeeding them is the kingdom set up by a stone cut out without hands falling upon the image and destroying it and spreading to fill the earth and this is what the the Prophet says about this in verse 44 in the days of those kings that is when the stone falls upon the image in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever now I would like to ask you to remember this great fact in Daniel chapter 2 verse 44 you have the root in Holy Scripture of both these expressions the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed that then is the kingdom of God it's going to succeed and [00:23:08] displace all these other kingdoms and just as those kingdoms mean a ruler with a hierarchy of authorities under him and his law spreading over it so the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will be a kingdom here upon this earth and the time when he rules will become and all the glowing promises of the Old Testament will be fulfilled now when the Lord Jesus Christ was here immediately subsequent to the time that I'm here speaking about he immediately begins to talk about another form of the kingdom and the differences between the two are very striking in the first place while the kingdom that I've been speaking about the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ had been promised in the plainest possible terms so that nobody could possibly misunderstand it [00:24:05] so long ago he begins to speak about a secret form a mystery form of the kingdom when he was here and in our chapter the 13th chapter of Matthew it is there very specially that he speaks like

this in the 11th chapter of Matthew he says the Lord Jesus answered their question and said because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given in other words before the time came when that kingdom would be established there would be another form of the kingdom but this time it would be in a mystery now a great deal might be said about the meaning of the word mystery but it means that it has not been known previously until it was revealed by the Apostles the Lord Jesus Christ being the great Apostle it was revealed in the New Testament times now if we compare the picture of that [00:25:05] kingdom that we have here in this chapter with what we know to be the Bible kingdom of the picture of the Millennium we'll see what a very striking difference there is between the two in the kingdom the Millennium we're told that when God's judgment falls upon the earth and in particular upon the final form of the Roman Empire that kingdom will come like lightning and like a flash of lightning with the brightness of his coming he will destroy the enemies of God and he will establish his kingdom now this form of the kingdom instead of being established by a lightning stroke of power and destruction from heaven it's good it was going to be started by the peaceful going out of the sewer to so what a striking contrast between these two forms of the kingdom one in the future and one which was beginning when the [00:26:02] Lord Jesus Christ uttered these words one of the very very striking differences and I must content myself for the moment with these two one of the very striking differences is that we read about the Millennial Kingdom of the Jesus Christ the kingdom for a thousand years that during that period Satan will be banned now there are some Christians who are so benighted as to believe that there's not going to be an earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Christ how they cope with that particular statement I'll never know during that earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Satan will be banned and we'll be deceiving the nation's no more I remember reading a comment by someone about this and he said if they can persuade themselves that Satan over all these years has been banned and not deceiving the nation's they can do so but it mean it cannot be persuaded it cannot it cannot persuade me it is perfectly obvious that Satan has not [00:27:05] been bound over all these times but when we come to this particular form of the kingdom one of the great things that I'm wanting to impress upon you this evening is that we have a great deal about the activity of Satan opposing the spread of that kingdom by the preaching of the Word of God the kingdom is spread by the preaching of the Word of God and every example given you have got the activity of Satan insidiously opposing the word and it's to take account of that particular thing that we have to take account of the things that are said in this chapter and apply them to ourselves now between the discourse in the sermon on the mount so-called and the discourse that we have here in chapter 13 we have several references to the to the Lord Jesus Christ as the [00:28:08] person who would come and set up his kingdom in God's good time in other words the person was pointed out very plainly in the references to the kingdom of God between chapter 8 and chapter 13 they bear witness to the state of affairs which made this the opportune moment for the new revelation of the mystery form of the kingdom the picture presented is of the national leaders with eyes wide open withholding acceptance of the kingdom being preached and recognition of and submission to the person in whom that kingdom had come near in superlative degree the Lord Jesus had shown himself to possess every quality required to fit him for the throne see his compassion in chapter 9 [00:29:01] verse 36 when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd being moved with compassion would his wisdom be equal to guiding the people are right behold in the sermon on the mount the laws forming a kingdom which would indeed be the desire of all nations the guidelines for a society promoting man's highest good given the compassion and the wisdom would he wield the power to deliver men from the evil one those who are most familiar with this story are as much as any in danger of overlooking this stupendous marvel of his instant mastery over all the foes of mankind from those which have by the development of the highest human powers being with difficulty kept in check at medical advance I mean to those which have without a single exception

defeated the [00:30:02] efforts of the greatest in the portion of the story contained within the limits of only these two chapters Matthew 9 and 10 disease demons tempest and even death itself are under his control where he rules these foes will not any longer remain to bring suffering and sorrow gather together the wisdom of all the philosophers and the knowledge of all science and the might of every conqueror I will be found that a start has scarcely been made to master these four tormentors of men Jesus was master of all and yet he was despised and rejected of men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hear as it were our faces from him he was despised and we esteemed him not in the wisdom and knowledge of God the full proof of man's evil as well as the full power of God's love required such a climax as the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus and [00:31:06] so there was necessary a form of the kingdom suitable to a king refused and therefore absent in heaven it's a very wonderful thing to take account of the fact that in these chapters which deal with the kingdom we have such glowing description of the person of the king and yet he was despised and rejected and therefore we have this form of the kingdom which is initiated by the parable of the sower now I would like to make a kind of autobiographical note here because there was a time of course when I was convinced as convinced as everybody that this parable was a parable that dealt with the unconverted it was the preaching of the word and it does of course say in one of the Gospels [00:32:04] that the result of the world in certain cases would they would believe and be saved but I was first of all stopped in my tracks by the realization of the simple fact of how true it is that I could be under the sound of the Word of God and not listening to it and if I was in the situation of being under the sound of the Word of God and not listening to it then the enemy is busy to snatch away that word and that particular portion of the precious seed of the Word of God is rendered without effect and therefore I need the warning which sums up the application by the Lord Jesus Christ of this parable to the disciples when he said take heed how you hear what is even more striking to me and what I hope you also will find striking is the fact that one finds so [00:33:07] very often that a person perhaps a young person will be truly converted and they will appear for a time to be going on well and then perhaps tribulation or persecution or some of these other things that are spoken of here and I'll speak a little more of them in detail that is the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life come along and the word is choked now that as an explanation this parable because I then noticed that in this parable we find that there are sometimes cases when the seed springs up and has life and yet in the end it comes to nothing and that proves to me that the prime purpose of this parable is not whether a person has life from God but whether the fruit [00:34:03] appears which is the fruit of the kingdom what is the fruit that this kind of parable envisages it envisages the spread and the deepening establishment of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in my life that I obey him first of all that he is my master in all things that is the fruit and when we see a believer turned aside from that exactly what is happening we have here I have in mind a situation it's far enough from any of you here that you couldn't possibly recognize the case but it's very frequently repeated a young man who gave gave every every sign of being the Lord's and there is no doubt indeed that he is the Lord's every sign of being the Lord's every desire to seek first the kingdom of God every desire to fling everything into this gigantic enterprise of the kingdom of God warned us all warned himself against the [00:35:03] dangers of business taking hold of a man's heart and the pleasures of the world and the time comes when he himself has succumbed to the insidious action of these things concerning which the Word of God says that they choke the word and this parable it is that gives us the reason for this happening and since it gives us a reason it enables us to pray with intelligence about it and above all it gives us to realize the tremendous importance of the ministry of the word as well as the preaching of the gospel every time the Word of God is ministered the parable the sword is reenacted and you and I are the subjects of it we can have our hearts trodden by the things of this world we can be so shallow the tribulation destroys the fruit or we can be clutched at the heart by the [00:36:02] things that belong to the world and it can all be brought to nothing so far as the manifestation of the authority of the Lord

Jesus Christ in our lives is concerned now in the parable of the sower it's obvious that the paramount lesson is brought to us as the fact that the appointed instrument and the only appointed instrument whereby the kingdom of God is begun and spread is the Word of God and in our days when people so easily turn to other things than the Word of God to spread the kingdom of God it is tremendously important that we should learn this lesson the seed that the Lord Jesus went out to sow the seed is the Word of God it's uniquely the Word of God it's singly the Word of God and the Word of God has it within its power to bring about the result of establishing and deepening the authority of the Lord [00:37:04] Jesus Christ in your life and mine that is the deepening and the spread of his kingdom the seed is called sometimes the word sometimes the Word of God and sometimes the Word of the kingdom as it is here in this passage the sower is not stated to be the Lord Jesus Christ but we can therefore understand that it was first of all himself as indeed it was him in the parable of the tares but probably takes in all those throughout the whole period of this mystery form of the kingdom when Jesus is in heaven and the kingdom is not established by power but established by the Word of God being spread abroad the sower is probably the Lord Jesus Christ and all others now the ground is clearly interpreted for us the ground or the soil is the heart of the hearers and that's a very important [00:38:04] thing because we can find that it is the state of the soil which enables the enemy and the world to get their victories and the fruit I'm suggesting to you more seriously the fruit is the establishment in our hearts and lives and the deepening of our response to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ now I want to read another extract at this point about this question of the fruit the practical consequences of this distinction that I'm making relative to the what the fruit what is the fruit are very great if we read the parable with the assumption that a successful result seems primarily a soul saved from death and judgment then once our own calling an election are sure we can [00:39:04] so to speak with a little exaggeration fold our arms at this point and think only of the salvation of others the truth is that we only rightly read this parable when we are alive to the fact that the enemies named are active to sap away our acceptance of the authority of Christ today and tomorrow and every time we hear the Word of God it is not less true in the subjective sense that the fruit is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Ghost every Christian reader every Christian hero therefore should read the parable with watchfulness on two fronts on the one hand he should be careful to learn about the use of the word as the instrument for spreading the kingdom on the other hand we should take how we hear since we are also the subject of that kingdom the spread of the kingdom relative to myself is the deepening establishment of the authority [00:40:02] of Christ in my life this means that I obey him more simply and fully in an ideal situation when a child obeys its parents such obedience is the child's link with the parents mature experience and knowledge and the plans which flow from these when the disciple obeys Christ in the details of life then disobedience links the disciples actions with all the breadth and length and depth and height of all is in the heart of God and to which he is working surely that is the reason for the prominence given to the kingdom of God from the beginning to the end of the New Testament one of the things that we perhaps ought to say about the prominence of the subject of the kingdom of God in the New Testament is are we to regard this as for example when the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection was speaking to them [00:41:01] about the gift of the Spirit that was to come and about their witness to him and about his second coming are we to regard this kingdom of God as a subject separate from these in the department by itself well I feel sure we would be wrong in thinking of this but the truth of God in New Testament days relative to our responsibility is the kingdom of God the truth of God relative to the purpose and counsel of God is that other thing that Paul preached and that is the whole counsel of God it's the same truth but on the side of our responsibility it's the kingdom of God on the side of God's purpose it is God's whole plan and counsel and includes Christ and the church in the mystery and the working out of these things and our place in the Father's house in eternity so that it's all the same truth from one side it's the truth of our responsibility on the [00:42:03] other side it's the truth relative to the

counsel of God now the great thing that we have to realize in all these accounts here is that the idea of conflict predominates I wonder if every young person and every older person for that matter who comes to the ministry of the word comes intent upon listening to the word intent upon realizing that we are about to be subjected to the the determinate settled means whereby God's will is accomplished in us God sends forth his word and it is to accomplish that where unto he sends its forth how tremendously important this makes our attitude when we are present at the ministry of the word I'm quite sure that many a young person needs instruction in the fact that it's not a matter of being entertained by the word [00:43:02] of God it's not a matter of only being interesting it's up to us of course if we possibly can to be interesting but the word of God is the appointed means whereby the will of God is accomplished in our lives therefore the great lesson is take heed how we hear if we are dead to it if we are fast asleep in the face of the ministry of the word be assured of this that the devil is active and that's one of the great lessons of this passage that wherever the word of God is being ministered and preached as it is today the devil is active and the world and the flesh are active and we need to be warned all the time that we deliberately open our hearts to the wonderful influence of the grace of God expressed in his word now this is clearly linked with the state of the soil in the first case that we read and it was this I illustrated by the story [00:44:05] of Galileo then the trodden heart see the trodden heart is obviously a heart which is so hardened by constant and sole preoccupation with the things of this life which may in themselves be all right that that heart cannot be entered by the word of God probably such a person has his mind on other things altogether and the word that the word of God is not left there by Satan we're told that the birds of the air come and take it away in the second case we read that there is shallow ground and when the Sun comes up then because it is shallow ground then the plant is destroyed we read that this is a figure of the effect perhaps long after conversion of the trials and tribulations [00:45:06] and perhaps persecution they they kill they destroy altogether the word and then in the third case there are plants that are native to the soil and they would certainly come up and destroy the word and in that case we're told very clearly what they are now so far as the effect of tribulation is concerned it's a very striking thing that trials and tribulations we understand clearly are all part of our father's training for us it's only when we are dead you see to what the Word of God tells us about that subject it's only when we're asleep to the fact that the father is training his children and by this chastening which is never for the present joyous but grievous he's wanting to make us [00:46:02] partakers of his holiness and keep us and bring us near to himself but if our hearts are dead to this then when tribulation comes and dries up and chokes the word altogether it is when we come to the effect of the thorns which more than ever removes us in time from the first impact of the word the thorns are those things that are native to the soil and they come and destroy I had a most amusing experience some years ago when two things happen simultaneously in my life one was I became a grandfather and at the same time going into a new house I began to make a new garden and the notable fact that was somehow rather known to all my friends in the area was that when I planted grass I got a most marvelous crop of shallot about a foot high almost before I could turn around [00:47:04] well about that time I was giving the prizes in the local Sunday school where everybody knew all about me and I was reading out the titles of the books as I gave them to the children this seemed to go right for a time and then finally it happened and I looked at this title and I said to myself well I've started with it and I have to go on with it and you can imagine the uproar when I read the title grandfather green fingers well those shallot seeds have been hidden in the ground and they were native to the ground a long time and it's rather like this that there are in this case the thorns that choke the seed now I would rather like to read an extract about this in case three some seed fell among [00:48:01] thorns and the thorns sprung up and choked them he also received seed among the thorns as he that heareth the word and the care of this world and the deceitful as of riches choke the word and he becometh unfruitful and in mark the cares of this world the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word and it becometh

unfruitful and very similar in the gospel of Luke the new group of enemies now introduced are even more evidently long-term and insidious in their action in other contexts these three might never be joined together but here they stand unmasked as the falls which after the words have been heard and the hearer has gone forth choke it they are likened to assailants who silently take hold secure the hold against the victim's struggle and slowly but surely bring resistance to an end in [00:49:02] death they choke the word and we have to consider in the three gospels which give us the the meaning of the thorns we have to consider that they are the cares or the riches or the pleasures of this life I wonder if it could be that we have amongst us someone more than one perhaps who once was devoted to this call of the Lord Jesus seek he first the kingdom of God but it's feeling the first deadening grip of the illumined of putting business first the riches the deceitfulness of riches or the pleasures of the world very very serious situation [00:50:01] we are warned that the enemies of the word long afterwards perhaps it may be that a young person has heard the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ over the tumult of this life's wild restless sea saying follow me but when middle life comes when business begins to prosper it's quite right the business should prosper it's quite right that we should devote it diligently to our business but it is not priority number one priority number one is the gigantic enterprise of the kingdom of God which via obedience to the Lord brings in all the wonders of his grace and his counsels of blessing for us and all others who believe in him but if we do not give it that priority and we shall find that we shall insidiously be strangled and our witness destroyed and our obedience and to the Lord Jesus Christ is gone you see why I'm so deeply impressed about the [00:51:02] idea that we should apply these lessons to ourselves now care that is in our modern language anxiety I will not say any more about that and the fact that if we are anxious and of course I'm just the same as anybody else here but I'm keep saying to myself and we ought to keep saying to ourselves if I am corroded by anxiety I'm flatly disobeying the Word of God which says don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving that your requests be made known unto God and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds that's the where we can pray against being choked by anxiety I know in these days how many brothers and sisters are in danger of being choked by anxiety the second thing [00:52:03] that we have before us is riches I'll read here riches are not in themselves marked as evil or inconsistent with fruitfulness write back to Joseph of Arimathea a rich man but also good and just and one that waited for the kingdom of God there has followed a noble succession of the few men of wealth who yet sought first the kingdom the warnings are against the love of money and the deceitfulness of riches in this place it is surely the false appearance that riches so often present that bears the emphasis the will to be rich does not reside in all indolence is in many cases stronger but the urge to love treasure for oneself where it exists is responsible for so many resounding casualties in the things of God because it is so specious and plausible in many things we all fail but we must not fail for lack of a clear statement that the [00:53:02] will to be rich is to be utterly excluded as a motive or aim so far as the disciple is concerned the second great thing that chokes the word in you and me potentially is riches and the deceitfulness of riches laying hold of us there are very many warnings in scripture against the deceitfulness of riches and then the last thing of the things that choke the word is pleasure pleasure has always assumed an immense importance in human life not only because and at the level that the natural man always seeks pleasure and if that this level we are alive in one of the distinctly pleasure-loving societies but because from the very earliest times there have been serious thinkers who have been hedonists that is they are equated the good with pleasure hmm there are many things which will rightly give him pleasure but pleasures [00:54:06] pursued for their own sake are amongst the enemy's hands choking the good seed many scriptures for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish disobedient deceived serving divers lusts and pleasures living in malice and envy hateful and hating one another and then in James whence come wars and fightings among you come they not hence even of your pleasures at war in your members and so on again and again there is

the warning against pleasure no reader of the English Bible could forget two related passages by faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God and to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season the second is the Messiah's resurrection cry of [00:55:04] Psalm 1611 showing where true pleasure lies thou will show me the path of life in thy presence is fullness of joy at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore and so we come to the case of the good seed the good the seed is always good I mean the good soil and I can only presume that the good soil is the soul which is not trodden down the soil which is not shallow but deep representing depths of exercise in the things of God and the the soil where there is adequate care taken about those ugly weeds that are native to the soil I close by reading another extract the parable of the sower is an immeasurable importance to the lives of those who are seeking first the kingdom as a kind of extension of the parable itself rather than its interpretation [00:56:04] Spurgeon said you may omit Oh recording angel the fact that a warrior went forth to fight it is far more important that you should record that a sower went forth to sow you may even forget that a man of science went into his laboratory and made a discovery for no discovery can equal in importance the usual processes of husbandry do you hear the song of the harvest home do you see the loaded wagons pulling one another to the farmer's barn if so remember that there will be no harvest home if the sower went not forth to sow as the flare is falling upon the wheat or the threshing machine is making the grain to leap from on the chaff and the bread set upon the table and parents and children are enjoying the fruit do not forget that all this could never happen unless a sower and forth to sow on this action and the very life of man bread which is [00:57:05] the stuff of life would be broken and taken from him and his life could not continue did not a sower still go forth to sow when the time was fulfilled and God turned to do a new thing in the world and said about the introduction of the long-promised kingdom the action taken was that the Son of Man went forth to sow the word and the first great character stamped upon that kingdom in the form it takes between the comings is that the appointed instrument of its beginning and its progress is the preaching of the Word of God we seek to seek that kingdom is to hear and use that word or write every time the Word of God is read preached or heard the parable of the sower is being reenacted in microcosm the same evil one is at work the same bill for influences are [00:58:01] found but the Word of God received and understood is powerful to form the kingdom to bring every thought into subjection to Christ it is at first sight a strange and unexpected thing that the word should be less than universally successful but it is true to experience and not more strange than the existence of evil in the world thanks be to God it is also true to experience that the word is extending its triumphs throughout the world and for the purposes introductory to the New Testament epistles it is plain that the reason is that the whole power of the grace of God and the operation of his spirit are included in the concept of the word at work in the hearts of men