

Expository Files



Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley - Editors

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12.1

A Warning To Preachers:

Comments on Crisis-Preaching & Culture-Preaching

Warren E. Berkley

CRISIS: While our preaching must respond to any crisis (involving any sin or error), our crisis-response-mode may tempt us to neglect other things (about which there is no present alarm). If today, for example, I preach on marriage, divorce and remarriage with such repetition and frequency, I neglect other things taught in the Scriptures, I have fallen under an undue influence. In such a time as this, we must preach what the Bible says about God's law of marriage. We should be anxious to tell people what Jesus said, and warn of the consequences of ignoring Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9. But if we do this in some sort of obsessive manner, we may betray our commitment to preach the whole counsel of God, *neglecting things of equal essentiality*.

CULTURE: There is another, very different, influence that may put us in position to violate our commitment as preachers. I'm talking about what the culture or market demands. In our time there is great interests in sermons known for their perceived practicality, popular style, brevity and emotional value. Generally, people have little interests in sermons delivered to respond to some sin or error. There is greater interests in vague, good advice, social commentary or the fashionable, ecumenical approach.

Though it may seem unlikely, there is the possibility of preachers falling into both of these pitfalls at the same time! {The devil can easily use the unlikely to slowly accomplish his purpose.} If you preach on marriage, divorce and remarriage over and over – then use the rest of your time catering to itching ears, you leave out a huge bulk of Biblical truth that holds great significance and need. When is the last time you delivered a sermon about the Lord's church, the Holy Spirit, the difference between the covenants, the error of premillennialism, etc., etc., etc.

The solution? Let your preaching be governed by one thing. The Word!

¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim. 4:1-5)

Doy Moyer wrote this, that fits the topic well:

See this at <http://www.studywell.org/articles/balancepreaching.htm>

Balance in Preaching

Preaching is not the easiest task in the world. The preacher knows that he must address subjects that are difficult and, sometimes, offensive to some. His job is to preach the word, in season and out, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with great patience and instruction (2 Tim. 4:2). He knows that there will be those who do not want to hear the truth, but would rather heap up teachers who will say those things they want to hear. And there are plenty of ear-ticklers available.

The preacher must be bold, uncompromising of truth, and plain-spoken so as to be understood. He knows that he cannot water the message down so that it loses its power and focus. He realizes that he has a great responsibility toward himself and those who hear what he has to say (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16). When he confronts sin, he must rebuke it. When he faces false teaching, he must be courageous. In all things, the true preacher knows that he answers to God first, and is not in the business of pleasing men (cf. Gal. 1:10).

But there's another side to this. Sometimes, in our fervor to "preach it like it is," we overstep our God-given boundaries. In the name of hard preaching, it is easy to "go past Jerusalem" and start getting downright mean. In order to win arguments and make ourselves look good, it is tempting to ridicule those who are in opposition to us. We can become rude, unkind, and abusive. Sarcasm (or better, irony), may have a proper place, but not when it is at the expense of gentleness, love, and respect. We can become careless in how we speak to others, and about others with whom we disagree. We may even begin to thrive on being offensive. We boast about our little debating techniques: "Did you see how I got him?" But this is a manifestation of self-righteousness and, ironically, shows a disregard for God and His Word.

How so? Because, while in stressing certain commands and steadfastly exercising our duty to reprove and rebuke, we may ignore other commands. We are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Our speech is to be "with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). We are to be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving, and devoid of bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor (Eph. 4:31-32). With those in opposition, we are to correct with gentleness (2 Tim. 2:25). These are

just as much commands of God as any other! To ignore these in the name of "sound" preaching is not only Pharisaical, it is just plain sinful. Contending for the faith does not equal being contentious and ugly.

Just remember, there is a difference between kind and mushy, between graceful speech and that which compromises truth. We need to learn these differences if we will really be faithful servants of God. The spirit in which we do something is every bit a part of the doctrine of Christ as those more difficult issues that we so often struggle with. Teach the truth, but let's do it in the way God has told us to do it. Keep the balance.

“Who Is Able To Stand?”

Rev. 7

Warren E. Berkley

The seventh chapter of Revelation is an encouraging interlude, in the midst of the conflict depicted in the seals opened in chapter six. *{Pause here and read Revelation 7}*

As the seals are opened and John sees what is pictured, saints are suffering persecution in worsening successions, yet God remains in control (as assured in chapter five). As the sixth seal is opened, John sees “the great day of” the Lord’s wrath. This tragic pictorial sequence leads to the question at the end of chapter six: ***“Who is able to stand?”***

Chapter seven answers, **the people of God**. Observe how they are described: “The servants of our God,” (verse 3) are the 144,000 (verse 4). The people of God are “sealed” (acknowledged, approved and protected by God). The great multitude of the faithful are clothed with white robes and their confession is, “Salvation belongs to our God!” These are the people of God, strengthened by God to come out of tribulation. They are *redeemed* by the blood of the Lamb and they are *led* by the Lamb (verses 14-17). Their eternal destiny is to serve God “day and night” and be perfectly comforted by Him (“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” v.17).

The chapter gave hope then and gives hope today. To those in the seven churches, suffering the persecution revealed in the seals, the message was one of hope and victory. To Christians today who suffer at the hands of those hostile to God, the hope is the same.

Every moment on earth, every activity and turn of events, ultimately serves the redeeming purpose of God for mankind. The kings of the earth

may set themselves up against God. Arrogant rulers may take counsel together, “against the Lord and against His Anointed,” saying, “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” But God “who sits in the heavens shall laugh.” “The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure...,” (see Psalms 2).

God is in control. “Winds may be strong or gentle, a curse or a blessing; but whichever they may be, they are held in restraint until God chooses to release them. Judgments are under His control,” (Homer Hailey, Revelation, p.#201). “Holy, Holy, Holy,” is the “Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come,” (Rev. 4:8).

God’s people are not destined for wrath. When discouraged and when our view of things is limited to what’s happening on earth now, we may be tempted to think there is no hope, or that evil is winning. When these attitudes dominate, we ought to turn to the book of Revelation and see that “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1 Thess. 5:9).

Everything happens in His time. “The restriction of destructive forces in these verses primarily teaches that the present order of creation shall be providentially preserved till the complete fulfillment of God’s redemptive purpose on earth.” (Coffman, Commentary on Revelation, p.#153). “God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed,” (Eccl. 3:17).

Perfect relief lies ahead. “...there was a beautiful propriety, at a time when such calamities impended over the church and the world — when there was such a certainty of persecution and sorrow — in permitting the mind to rest on the contemplation of these happy scenes in heaven, where all the redeemed, in white robes, and with palms of victory in their hands, would be gathered before the throne. To us also now, amidst the trials of the present life — when friends leave us; when sickness comes; when our hopes are blasted; when calumnies and reproaches come upon us; when, standing on the verge of the grave, and looking down into the cold tomb, the eyes pour forth floods of tears — it is a blessed privilege to be permitted to look forward to that brighter scene in heaven, where not a pang shall ever be felt, and not a tear shall ever be shed.” (Barnes). “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” (Rev. 7:17).

Love Not The World
1 Jno. 2:15-17
George Slover

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

It is impossible for one to claim fellowship with God and to pattern their life after the world. John repeats this theme throughout this letter. He informs us that we must (I John 1:7) “walk in the light” and that we cannot simultaneously walk in the light and walk in darkness. “Don’t love the world’s ways or the world’s goods”, John says. To John, the “world” represents everything that is contrary to keeping the faith.

Indeed, the world has a different view of how we should live. Our postmodern culture believes that all ideas are valid. We are free to believe and practice whatever we desire, in the name of diversity and tolerance. In our broadminded world more and more folks have gravitated toward the hedonistic view – “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die”. It is easy for the Christian, in this environment, to have a *Playboy* view of the world rather than a biblical view.

Before his departure, Jesus told his disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:19) James said, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”(James 4:4-5) Looking, dressing, acting, and talking like the world are not the marks of followers of Christ.

If I intend to be all that God wants me to be, I must hear and do what he says day by day, and moment by moment. So determine to stop that affair you’ve been having with sin. Get busy enjoying the rewards of living for God.

by George Slover

See other material by George at www.smcofc.com

The Baptism of Jesus
(Matthew 3:13-17)
By Jon W. Quinn

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was baptized? Have you ever considered that His obedience has lessons for us in it? Have you ever considered His holy righteousness and need for "perfection" to bring Christians to perfection? We hope to cover some of these points in this article.

We find the accounts of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22. Consider Matthew's account: "Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him. And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'

"To Be Baptized"

Jesus had a purpose in mind in seeking out John. He wanted to be baptized by him (Matthew 3:13). The Greek word "baptizo" means "immersion." John was immersing people in the waters of the Jordan River. He was not sprinkling a little water on them, neither was he pouring water on them. In fact, even today the Greek Orthodox church practices immersion because they, being Greek, know what the word meant. It would not be appropriate to refer to John as "John the sprinkler."

This is exactly why John chose the location he did to do his work. If he had been "John the Sprinkler" he could have carried some water with him. But because he immersed, he had to work in an area that had enough water. The Bible says, "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being

baptized.” (John 3:23). John selected this place "because" of what? Because there was “much water there!”

We can see implications that immersion was involved from the language used. John was baptizing “in” the Jordan River (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:0) and this involved going “down into” and “coming up out of” the water (Mark 1:10).

Trying to Prevent Baptism

Often the world tries to prevent people from being baptized, but not usually for the same reasons! (Matthew 3:14). Instead, sometimes a human religious creed/tradition stipulates sprinkling. At other times, relatives/friends are against it. Today, in some nations, it is a crime to teach people to be baptized! But John's reason was very different!

John had been baptizing people “for remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Before being baptized, the people had been coming and confessing their sins (Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:6). But Jesus had no sins (Hebrews 4:15). For this reason, John did not think that baptizing Jesus would be appropriate, and suggested a better way would be for Jesus to baptize John.

Now even today there might be some good reasons not to baptize someone. We should not baptize one who does not believe or repent (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Neither should we baptize a person who is ignorant of its purpose - to receive the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). If one has not reached the maturity to accept the gospel by faith, then he or she should not be baptized (Acts 8:12).

Permitting Baptism

“But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him.' (Matthew 3:15) All John thought about Jesus' perfect sinlessness was true. But Jesus calls upon John to make this exception because it was “fitting” to do so.

Here's why: This Jesus was God in human flesh obeying the commands of John, who was the prophet of God. John's work had been prophesied in the Old Testament (see Matthew 3:3). Jesus had come to do the will of the Father. He said, "I have come to do thy will" (Hebrews. 10:7-

8). John was God's prophet, and Jesus would be obedient unto the Father by being baptized by the Father's prophet.

This is what is meant by "fulfill all righteousness." Jesus intended on doing all that was God's will for Him to do. That is how we "fulfill all righteousness" today as well. We ought to have the same intention that Jesus did to do the Father's will.

Just as there is much controversy in the religious world today about baptism, there was in Jesus' world as well. (see Luke 7:29-30.) The people who understood their need as sinners for God's grace accepted John's baptism and God's justification (righteousness). Others, like the Pharisees, rejected John's baptism and sought to prevent others from being baptized (see Matthew 21:23-28; 23:13).

And today as well; just as certainly as rejecting John meant rejecting God; so does rejecting the messages of Scripture concerning baptism today (1 Peter 3:20,21).

Righteousness and Perfection

Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan (Mark 1:9). Jesus was motivated by His reverence for the Father's will (Hebrews 5:7-9). The word translated "fear" (KJV) or "piety" (NASB) means to possess that careful and watchful reverence which seeks to obey in every circumstance. Like Jesus, we should be careful to obey God in everything.

The Hebrew writer also says that Jesus was made "perfect." The word translated "perfect" means to complete, to initiate, or to qualify. Jesus came to accomplish all that God meant for Him to do, and His baptism was a part of that. Jesus would leave nothing undone that God had appointed. That should be our attitude as well.

Power After Baptism

"And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him" (Matthew 3:16). This, too, had been prophesied (see Isaiah. 61:1-2a - quoted as fulfilled in Luke 4:18). The Lord had told John that He would identify His Son in this way (John 1:32-34).

The Father made it known that He was “well pleased” with His Son (Matthew 3:17). It is a successful life when it is lived to please God. It was Jesus' purpose, and it ought to be ours as well.

As Christians, we have been immersed into Christ (Romans 6:3-4). We did not let anything “prevent” us from being baptized. It is God's command, and we revered Him in keeping it. When we did so, He washed away our sins (Acts 22:16). It pleased the Father to take away our sins and receive us into His house by His grace.

Take Heed How You See
(1 Timothy 4:13)
By Ed Barnes

Most of us are familiar with the words of Jesus in Luke 8:18, "take heed therefore how ye hear" (KJV). We also ought to take heed how we see. Generally speaking, our eyes play an important role in our faith because the Bible is a book to be read, reread, studied, analyzed and then read again, ad infinitum. 1 Timothy 4:13 says, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." Paul expresses his personal need for reading and study when he requests of Timothy, "When you come, bring . . . my scrolls, especially the parchments" (2 Tim 4:13). Our physical eyes, therefore, play an important role in the process of establishing faith and in our unending effort to remain strong in that faith.

There are differences, however, in how one sees the scriptures. One can see a scripture simply in the act of viewing it. It can also be said that one sees the scriptures in looking closely at its details. And finally, one can see a passage in the sense that he perceives its spiritual meaning and application.

The differences between viewing, looking closely, and perceiving are remarkably illustrated in the empty tomb narrative of John 20:1-10. In this context the English word see (or a slight variation) is used to translate three different Greek words, which when examined, reveal three different ways of seeing.

Viewing

Upon receiving Mary Magdalene's report that Jesus' body had been taken out of the sepulcher, Peter and John run together to the place of burial. "Both

were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in"(Jn 20:4,5). The Greek word translated looked is blepei. The meaning of the word indicates that Peter simply viewed or took a look at the contents of the tomb from without, apparently without any significant reaction other than the affirmation that what Mary had just seen and reported was true.

Looking Closely

Peter's observation was more intimate. The context says: "Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen" (Jn 20:6,7). Peter actually went into the sepulcher and saw something clearly astounding. The napkin, or head roll, was still intact like a cocoon, all rolled up. The Greek word translated see in this instance is theorei. The meaning is to behold, or to look closely or intently. Peter stood there looking and looking at those bands of linen and the head roll. He did more than just view or glance over the items in the tomb. He knew he was looking at something special, unusual and significant. Peter's seeing was more intense than John's for Peter was face to face with the impossible: the separation of a body from its grave wrappings, without the disturbance of the latter.

Perceiving

The text continues with John entering the tomb. "Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed" (20:8). The text says that John saw. The Greek word here is eiden. The meaning here is to perceive or understand. John saw and believed. He believed as a consequence of what he saw. In this context the word must mean that he believed in the resurrection of Jesus. The evidence before his eyes he read rightly and reacted in the right way. In the previous instance, when Peter saw the contents of the tomb, even though he looked closely at the evidence, he did not believe. As a matter of fact Luke 24:12 tells us that Peter went away confused, wondering to himself what had happened. However, when John saw the evidence that Peter saw, he was convinced. He believed.

Conclusion

How do you see the Scriptures? What is your reaction when you consider the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? You say that you do believe in Jesus and in the fact of his resurrection! Well, then how do you see the commands

of Jesus? Is it your habit to simply view the Bible as a good book filled with good suggestions? Or have you gone a step farther and looked closely at the Word of God to see how it applies to your life? Hopefully, you will see and believe as John did.

Topic Page:

Don't Worry, Be Happy

Bubba Garner

Remember that song? Or how about the one from Disney's *The Lion King*? "It means no worries for the rest of your days; it's our problem-free philosophy, hakuna matata!" Even though both of those songs were at one time very popular, we still live in what is being called the "Age of Anxiety." Apparently, the problem of worry is not unique to our generation or Jesus never would have devoted a large section to this issue in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:25-34). And in the Parable of the Sower, He identified "the worries of the world" (Mark 4:19) as thorns which choke out the life of the word of God.

That's where we get our word *worry*. It comes from an Old English term that means "to strangle." The Greek word paints a picture of a mind torn in two directions, one that is divided and distracted. It seems logical that Jesus would address His concerns for worry after saying that "no man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). If you're occupied with worrying, how can you be working for the Master?

Before we are too quick to sympathize with Jesus' audience, notice that the things *we* worry about are completely different than what *they* were worrying about. Jesus told them, "do not worry, then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" This kind of worry about food is not having to decide between Mexican or Italian. Nor does the concern for clothing have to do with being uncertain whether to wear brown shoes or black shoes with your outfit. These people were worried about having any food to put on the table or even a stitch of clothes to put on their backs. In other words, what they worried about make our concerns pale into insignificance. And if Jesus had to get on them for worrying about the necessities of life, what do you think He would say to us about the things that occupy, distract, and divide our minds?

I offer these suggestions as to why worry is, in fact, not worth the worry.

Worry sets our minds on the world, not on the kingdom. That's why so much attention is given to the subject in Scripture. Jesus introduces this topic in a section on materialism, serving God vs. serving mammon. That makes an easy transition to talk about worry, because the devil doesn't care whether your heart is carried away by riches or by anxiety, just so long as it is carried away from God. When Martha was upset about Mary listening to Jesus instead of helping her serve, Jesus told her, "you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary" (Luke 10:38-42). Worry distracts us from the one thing that is most important, the one thing we ought to be doing. In all the options that seem to be available in life, there are actually only two. Which will you choose?

"Do not be anxious...but seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:25,34). If you want assurance of provision, you don't seek things, you seek God. And upon securing your relationship with Him, making spiritual sustenance your priority, He will provide the daily bread. Upon making the decision to improve that area of your life, to make the righteousness of God your own, improvement in every area of life is the inevitable result. Don't get that backwards.

Worry demonstrates a lack of faith in God. Worrying about food, drink, and clothing are things that the "Gentiles eagerly seek" (Matt. 6:32). Jesus calls them "men of little faith," because they were acting like the Lord didn't know or didn't care that they were hungry, thirsty, and in need of clothes. They were in covenant relationship with God but were demonstrating less faith than those who didn't know Him at all.

Consider the sparrows, five of which are sold for two cents. "And yet not one of them is forgotten before God" (Luke 12:6). If the smallest and humblest of God's creatures are given such rich provision, what then, for the pinnacle of His creation, for those who have been made in His image and have become His children through the blood of His Son? And what about the lilies of the field, generally used for kindling? If the God of heaven has tended to the flowers whose life is but a breath and a sigh, will He not clothe with righteousness those whose destiny is *eternal* life? Surely a God who has given Jesus to satisfy our spiritual needs has sought out ways to provide for our physical ones as well. If He can solve our most basic problem,

salvation for sin, we ought to trust Him with any other difficulty that comes our way.

Worry is worthless. Having worried and worried and worried about something, what good does it accomplish? What does it change? It is a useless endeavor. “Who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life” (Matt. 6:27)? In fact, worry doesn’t lengthen life, it tends to shorten it. Not just in the sense of “worrying yourself sick.” But all too often, life is what happens while we’re worrying that something else will happen. Our time here is short enough as it is, a “vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). How much more is that vapor abbreviated when what little time we do have is wasted away with fretful, anxious care?

These passages on worry do not promote idleness, a spirit that says we can just sit back in the recliner and let God take care of everything for us. Other scriptures tell us that we must “labor, performing with our hands that which is good” (Eph. 4:28) and that we ought to provide for our own and our household (1 Tim. 5:8). We need to do what we can. But we do so with the understanding that “God will take care of what we cannot” (Paul Earnhart).

The Plan of Salvation ***By Jon W. Quinn***

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page
The Seed is the Word of God
By Jon W. Quinn

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that the seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11). Jesus used this parable to teach some essentials concerning the kingdom of God. Among the lessons found are that the harvest comes only after the planting of the seed; that the seed produces only after its own kind, and not all types of soil are good to produce valued crops. Of course, Jesus was not really teaching us how to be good farmers at all, but using that as an illustration of some similar spiritual truths. He was teaching us about spreading, or planting the word of the gospel and the different reactions that are encountered when the gospel is taught.

First, in order for a conversion to take place, there must be teaching. You cannot produce a Christian apart from planting the right seed, that being the word of God. Just as turnip seeds cannot produce tomatoes, other creeds than the gospel cannot produce Christians. A farmer understands this principle, and we should apply its spiritual side and make certain that we are accurately representing the gospel of Christ both in our words and actions.

Also, we need to understand that not every heart is ready to respond in a positive way to the gospel. Just like some soil, a heart might become rock hard and unyielding, making it difficult for faith to grow there. Other hearts might be crowded with other things, such as materialism, greed, selfishness, hatreds, immorality and so forth. These things, as thorns and weeds, might choke the life out of a faith just beginning to grow. But there will also be

times when the gospel is received by good and honest hearts and yield much fruit. God gives the increase.

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