

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO MARK 4

**Ver. 1.** *And he began again to teach by the sea side*, etc..] He went out of the house where he was at Capernaum, the same day he had the above discourse with the Scribes and Pharisees, and on which his mother and brethren came to speak with him; and from thence he went where he had been before, and taught the people; namely, to the sea side, the shore of the sea of Galilee, or Tiberias:

*and there was gathered unto him a great multitude*; which followed him from the house, and from other parts of the city, and perhaps from the adjacent places:

*so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea*; in the ship at sea, at some little distance from the shore; the sea of Tiberias being rather a lake, and within land, had no tide, and so was still and quiet:

*and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land*; stood on the land, all along the sea shore; (see Gill on “<sup>403b</sup>Matthew 13:1-2”).

**Ver. 2.** *And he taught them many things by parables*, etc..] As he sat in the ship, and they stood on shore;

*and said unto them in his doctrine*; as he was teaching them, and delivering unto them the doctrine he had received from his Father: though the Jews say<sup>f51</sup>, that

“the Israelites will have no need *ym l m l wdwm l t l* , “of the doctrine of the king Messiah, in the time to come”; because it is said, “unto him shall the Gentiles seek”, and not the Israelites.”

But it appears from hence, and many other places, that the Israelites both stood in need of his doctrine, and sought after it; and very excellent it was; the doctrine of God, and of the grace of God; and was spoken with authority, and in such a manner as never man spake, and which he delivered to his apostles; and which, if ministers bring not with them, should not be bid God speed.

**Ver. 3.** *Hearken, behold, there went out a sower to sow.*] By whom is meant Jesus Christ, who came forth from God as a teacher, and went out into the land of Judea to preach the Gospel, which is sowing spiritual things among men; and this may be also applicable to any faithful minister of the word.

**Ver. 4.** *And it came to pass, as he sowed,* etc..] Whilst he was preaching the Gospel, casting about the precious seed of the word, he was laden with:

*some fell by the way side;* the common beaten path: the word was dispensed among some men comparable to it, on whom it lighted, but made no impression; there it lay, though not long, and was not inwardly received, and took no root, and consequently was of no effect:

*and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up;* the devils, who have their abode in the air, especially the prince of the posse of them; and the Syriac version reads it in the singular number, “and the fowl came”; that ravenous bird of prey, Satan, who goes about seeking what he may devour; and for this purpose attends where the word is preached, to hinder its usefulness as much as in him lies.

**Ver. 5.** *And some fell on stony ground,* etc..] The word was preached to some persons who had hearts of stone, and which remained so:

*where it had not much earth;* and so could be received only in a notional and superficial way, but could take no place, so as to produce any good effect:

*and immediately it sprung up;* a sudden and hasty profession of the word was made, without a powerful experience of it:

*because it had no depth of earth;* if it had, it would have been longer in coming up; more work would have been done by it, which would have required more time, before a profession of it had been made.

**Ver. 6.** *But when the sun was up, it was scorched,* etc..] When persecution arose because of the word, and that became very hot and vehement, it tried and pierced through this thin speculative knowledge of the word, which could not stand before it, and bear the heat of it:

*and because it had no root, it withered away*; the word had only a place in the head, and not in the heart; wherefore the profession of it was soon dropped, and came to nothing.

**Ver. 7.** *And some fell among thorns*, etc..] The word was ministered to some who were eat up with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and other lusts:

*and the thorns grew up, and choked it*; the word did not take place so as to beat down, overcome, and root out these things, nor even to weaken, and keep under, and prevent the influence of them; but these got the ascendant of the word, and prevailed over it, and made it altogether useless and unsuccessful: for whilst it was administered, the minds of these persons were after their riches and worldly things, and gave no heed to the word; and last were prevailed upon, not to attend upon it, but drop the profession of it:

*and it yielded no fruit*; it was not the means of grace; faith did not come by it, nor any other grace; nor did it produce good works in the life and conversation.

**Ver. 8.** *And other fell on good ground*, etc..] The word was preached to some whose hearts were disposed by the Spirit and grace of God to receive it; and their understandings were enlightened by it; and they had a savoury and comfortable experience of the truths of it, it coming with power to them; it was a good word to them, and through the grace of God they became good by it; a good work of grace was wrought upon their souls, and they were filled with all goodness and righteousness:

*and did yield fruit that sprang up, and increased*; they not only appeared, and made an outward profession of the word, and brought forth a little show of fruit, which comes to nothing, as in others; but they were filled with the fruits of righteousness, and increased with the increase of God, and grew in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and continued to bring forth fruit to the end of their lives:

*and brought forth some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred*; that is, so many fold: in some the word of God produced larger and greater effects; the grace of God was more in exercise in some, than in others, and some were more fruitful and useful; yet in all of them there was true grace, and a measure of it; some degree of lively exercise, and some usefulness.

**Ver. 9.** *And he said unto them,* etc..] To the multitude of hearers that were on the sea shore attending to the word preached, and among whom, doubtless, there were all those sorts of hearers mentioned in this parable:

*he that hath ears to hear, let him hear:* observe, and take notice of what has been said, as being of the greatest moment and importance: for a larger explanation and illustration of this parable, see the notes on (~~418B~~ Matthew 13:3-9).

**Ver. 10.** *And when he was alone,* etc..] After the multitude was dismissed, and he either remained in the ship, or left it, and retired to some private place, it may be to Simon's house in Capernaum. The Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “when they were alone”; meaning as follows,

*they that were about him with the twelve;* that is, such disciples of his, who, besides the twelve, constantly attended him; perhaps those who now were, or hereafter were the seventy disciples. The Vulgate Latin reads, “the twelve that were with him”. In Beza's most ancient copy it is read, “his disciples”; and to this agrees the Persic version; and so the other evangelists, Matthew and Luke, relate, that his disciples came and

*asked of him the parable;* the meaning of it, and why he chose this way of speaking to the people, (~~418B~~ Matthew 13:10 ~~418B~~ Luke 8:9), though that word may include others besides the twelve.

**Ver. 11.** *And he said unto them,* etc..] His disciples;

*unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God;* or the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the secrets of the Gospel dispensation, the mysterious doctrines of grace; (see Gill on “~~418B~~ Matthew 13:11”),

*but unto them that are without;* “to strangers”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, who were not the disciples of Christ, nor admitted to any intimacy with him; who came only to amuse themselves with the sight of his person and miracles:

*all [these] things are done in parables;* are wrapped up in dark sayings, and figurative expressions, the sound of which they heard, and might be pleased with the pretty similes made use of, but understood not the spiritual meaning of them.

**Ver. 12.** *That seeing they may see,* etc..] Which the end and reason of his speaking to them in parables. The passage referred to is in (<sup>238B</sup>Isaiah 6:9,10). (See Gill on "<sup>4034</sup>Matthew 13:14-15").

**Ver. 13.** *And he saith unto them, know ye not this parable?* etc..] So easy to be understood, taken from things common, and which fall under every one's observation:

*and how then will you know all parables?* if not this single one, and which is so plain, how will ye be able to understand the numerous parables hereafter to be related, and which will be much more difficult?

**Ver. 14.** *The sower soweth the word.*] Though our Lord thought fit to give the above gentle rebuke to his disciples for their dulness; yet he condescends to favour them with an interpretation of the above parable, which here begins: by this it appears, that the seed in the parable, before delivered, and which fell on different sorts of ground, is the word of God, which was preached to hearers of different dispositions: the word is the word of life and truth; the word of peace and reconciliation; the word of faith and righteousness; the word of salvation; the word which publishes and declares all these to be in and by Jesus Christ.

**Ver. 15.** *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown,* etc..] Such hearers are represented by the way side, in which the seed fell; who, coming where the Gospel is preached, stop awhile and hear it, and so are only casual and accidental hearers of it:

*but when they have heard;* and indeed whilst they are hearing, and before they are well got out of the place of hearing,

*Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.* The devil, signified by the fowl, or fowls of the air, immediately takes notice of such hearers, and is very busy with them; filling their minds with other things suitable to their dispositions, and setting before them other objects, whereby their minds are, at once, taken off from what they have been hearing; so that all that they have observed, and laid up in their memories, is lost at once, and never thought of any more.

**Ver. 16.** *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground,* etc..] Such sort of hearers of the word are signified by the stony ground, on which the seed were sown, who are constant hearers of the word, and have some understanding of it, and some sort of affection for it, and yet their

hearts are not truly broken by it; they are not brought to a thorough sight and sense of sin, and of their need of Christ, and salvation by him; their stony hearts are not taken away, and hearts of flesh given them:

*who when they have heard the word immediately receive it with gladness;* seem highly pleased, and greatly delighted with it, as being a well connected scheme things; and which declares things, as heaven and eternal happiness, which they, from a principle of self love, are desirous of enjoying.

**Ver. 17.** *And have no root in themselves,* etc..] The word has no root in their hearts, only in their natural affections: nor is the root of grace in them; there is no heart work, only speculative notions, and flashy affections:

*and so endure but for a time:* they continue hearers and professors of the Gospel but for a small season; like the Jews, who rejoiced in the ministry of John the Baptist for a while, and then left him:

*afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.* As soon as any small degree of trouble comes upon them, and especially when there is a hot persecution of the professors of religion, because of the Gospel they have embraced; such hearers are stumbled at these things, and cannot bear the loss of any thing, or endure any thing severe for the sake of the word they have professed a pleasure in; and therefore, rather than suffer, they relinquish at once their profession of it.

**Ver. 18.** *And these are they that are sown among thorns,* etc..] Such hearers of the word are designed by the thorny ground, upon which other seed fell, as it was sown, who are of worldly dispositions; who are immoderately careful and anxious about the things of this life, and are bent upon acquiring earthly riches, and gratifying their carnal and sensual appetites:

*such as hear the word;* who notwithstanding are prevailed upon through custom, or the dictates of their consciences, to attend upon the ministry of the word.

**Ver. 19.** *And the cares of this world,* etc..] The perplexing and distressing cares of it to get as much of it as they can, for themselves and families, fill their minds, and possess their souls even when and while they are hearing the word: and the deceitfulness of riches; or riches which are deceitful,

especially when trusted in, and being obtained, they do not give the satisfaction they promise: and the lusts of other things entering in: carnal desires after other objects, which are pleasing to the sensual mind, entering into their hearts, and gaining, the ascendant there: choke the word, and it, becometh unfruitful; these being more attended to than the word is, that is quite lost, and becomes useless, and unprofitable.

**Ver. 20.** *And these are they which are sown on good ground*, etc..] Such hearers who are intended by the good ground on which other seed fell, are those who are made good men by the grace of God; for there is none good naturally, nor that doeth good, no not one; these are

*such who hear the word, and receive it*; as the word of God, in whose hearts it works effectually; who receive it not into their heads only, but into their hearts; and having received it, hold it fast, and abide by it in the worst of times:

*and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred*; all bring forth good fruit of the same quality, though not of the same quantity: for a larger exposition of this explanation of the parable, see the notes on (<sup>4139</sup>Matthew 13:19-23).

**Ver. 21.** *And he said unto them*, etc..] At the same time, after he had explained the parable of the sower; for though the following parabolical and proverbial expressions were delivered by Christ at other, and different times, and some of them twice, as related by other evangelists; yet they might be all of them expressed or repeated at this time, by our Lord, showing why he explained the above parable to his disciples; and that though he delivered the mysteries of the Gospel in parables to them that were without, yet it was not his design that these things should be always kept a secret, and that from all men: for as the Gospel might be compared to seed, so likewise to a candle, the design and use of which is to give light to men: wherefore he asks,

*is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick?* when a candle is brought into a room, in the night, where company are together, to converse, or read, or work; is it proper that it should be covered with a bushel, or any other hollow vessel? or when brought into a bedchamber, is it right to put it under the bed? is it not most fitting and convenient, that it should be set in a candlestick, and then it will be of use to all in the room? so the Gospel, which is the candle of the

Lord, he had lighted up in the evening of the Jewish world, in the land of Judea; it was not his will that it should be always, and altogether, and from all men, covered with parables, and dark sayings, without any explanation of them; but that the light of it should be communicated, especially to them his; disciples, who were to be the lights of the world, and which were to shine openly before men, for their good, and the glory of his heavenly Father; (see <sup><4154></sup>Matthew 5:14-16).

**Ver. 22.** *For there is nothing hid*, etc..] In these parables, and figurative expressions used by Christ,

*which shall not be manifested*, sooner or later, to his disciples:

*neither was any thing kept secret*; any doctrine of the Gospel, or mystery of the kingdom:

*but that it should come abroad*; it was designed to be published in all Judea, and afterwards, throughout the whole world, for the benefit of God's chosen ones, to their conversion, comfort, and edification: wherefore it becomes the ministers of the Gospel to keep back nothing that may be profitable to the churches, nor shun to declare the whole counsel of God; but faithfully dispense the mysteries of grace, and commend the truth to every man's conscience, without any fear of men, or dreading the effects and consequences of things: since nothing is declared in the word, or made known, but with a design to be published to others, to answer some divine end and purpose; (see Gill on <sup><4005></sup>Matthew 10:26”).

**Ver. 23.** *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear*.] What is now delivered, being very momentous and important; (see <sup><4015></sup>Matthew 11:15).

**Ver. 24.** *And he said unto them*, etc..] At the same time, though he had said what follows at another time, still continuing his discourse with his disciples:

*take heed what you hear*: diligently attend to it, seek to understand it, and lay it up in your minds and memories, that it may be of use to you in time to come, and you may be useful in communicating it to others:

*with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you*; a common proverb among the Jews, used on various occasions, and to different purposes; (see Gill on <sup><4002></sup>Matthew 7:2”). Here it seems to intimate, that if the disciples carefully hearkened to what they heard from Christ, and



studiously laboured to understand it, and faithfully dispensed it to others, in return, a larger measure, and greater degree of spiritual knowledge, would be bestowed upon them: for it follows, and

*unto you that hear, shall more be given;* that is, that hear so as to understand, keep, and make a good use of what they hear, more shall be communicated to them; they shall have an increase of knowledge in the doctrines of grace, and mysteries of the Gospel.

**Ver. 25.** *For he that hath, to him shall be given,* etc..] He that has Gospel light and knowledge, and makes a proper use of it, he shall have more; his path shall be as the path of the just, which shines more and more to the perfect day; the means of grace and knowledge shall be blessed, to him, he attending constantly thereon, that he shall arrive to such a knowledge of the Son of God as to be a perfect man in comparison of others, who are in a lower class; and shall come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, shall grow up to maturity, and be a man in understanding: and he that has the truth of grace, though its beginning is but small, yet that making and keeping him humble, as it always does, he shall have more grace, or that he has shall open and enlarge in its actings and exercises; his faith shall grow exceedingly, he shall abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; and his love to God, and Christ, and to the saints, shall be greater and greater; and he shall increase in humility, patience, self-denial, etc.. and so he that has gifts for public usefulness, and does not neglect them, but stirs them up for the profit of others, he shall have an increase of them; he shall shine as a star in Christ's right hand, and appear brighter and brighter in the firmament of the church:

*and he that hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath;* or seemed to have, or thought he had, (<sup><1818></sup>Luke 8:18), a saying often used by Christ, both with respect to the ignorant Jews, and professing Christians, and even, as here, to the disciples themselves, respect perhaps being had to Judas. He that has only a speculative notion of the Gospel, and is without any experience and practice of it, in course of time his candle is put out; his light becomes darkness; he drops and denies the truths he held, and relinquishes the profession of them: and he that has only counterfeit grace, a feigned faith, a false hope, and a dissembled love, in due time these will be discovered, and the name of them, and the character he bore, on account of them, will be taken from him: for true grace is never taken away, nor lost; it is a solid, permanent thing, and is inseparable to

everlasting glory and happiness: but bare notions of the Gospel, and a mere show of grace, are unstable and transient things; as also are the greatest gifts without the grace of God. Judas had doubtless all the appearance of a true Christian; he had the Gospel committed to him, and the knowledge of it, and gifts qualifying him to preach it, and a commission from Christ for it, yea, even a power of working miracles to confirm what he preached; and yet not having true grace, all was taken away from him, and were of no use unto him in the business of salvation: and so sometimes it is, that even in this life the idle and worthless shepherd has his right arm clean dried up, and his right eye utterly darkened; his ministerial light and abilities are taken away from him; these being either not used at all by him, or used to bad purposes; (see ~~4020~~ Matthew 12:12 25:29).

**Ver. 26.** *And he said*, etc..] He went on saying the following parable, which was delivered at the same time that the parable of the sower was, though omitted by Matthew; and is here placed between that, and the other concerning the grain of mustard seed; which shows the time when it was spoken. The design of it is to set forth the nature of the word, and the ministration of it; the conduct of the ministers of the Gospel, when they have dispensed it; the imperceptibleness of its springing and growth; the fruitfulness of it, when it has taken root, without the help of man; the gradual increase of grace under the instrumentality of the word; and the gathering of gracious souls, when grace is brought to maturity:

*so is the kingdom of God*; such is the nature of the Gospel dispensation; and such are the things that are done in it, as may fitly be represented by the following;

*as if a man should cast seed into the ground*: by “the man”, is not meant Christ, for he sleeps not; and besides, he knows how the seed springs and grows; but any Gospel minister, who is sent forth by Christ, bearing precious seed: and by seed is intended, not gracious persons, the children of the kingdom, as in the parable of the tares; nor the grace of God in them, though that is an incorruptible and an abiding seed; but the word of God, or Gospel of Christ, so called for its smallness, the diminutive character it bears, and contempt it is had in by some; and for its choiceness and excellency in itself, and in the account of others; and for its generative virtue under a divine influence: for the Gospel is like the manna, which was a small round thing, as a coriander seed; and as that was contemptible in the eyes of the Israelites, so the preaching of the Gospel is, to them that

perish, foolishness; and yet it is choice and precious seed in itself, and to those who know the value of it, by whom it is preferred to thousands of gold and silver; and, as worthless and unpromising as it may seem to be, it has a divine virtue put into it; and, under the influence of powerful and efficacious grace, it is the means of regenerating souls, and produces fruit in them, which will remain unto everlasting life: though, as the seed is of no use this way, unless it is sown in the earth, and covered there; so is the Gospel of no use for regeneration, unless it is by the power of God let into the heart, and received there, where, through that power, it works effectually. By “casting” it into the earth, the preaching of the word is designed; which, like casting seed into the earth, is done with the same sort of seed only, and not with different sorts, with plenty of it, and at the proper time, whatever discouragements there may be, and with great skill and judgment, committing it to God to raise it up again: for the faithful dispensers of the word do not spread divers and strange doctrines; their ministry is all of apiece; they always sow the same like precious seed, without any mixture of the tares of error and heresy; and they do not deal it out in a narrow and niggardly way; they do not restrain and conceal any part of truth, but plentifully distribute it, and declare the whole counsel of God; and though there may be many discouragements attend them, many temptations arise to put off from sowing the word; the weather bad, storms and tempests arise, reproaches and persecutions come thick and fast, still they go on; using all that heavenly skill, prudence, and discretion God has given them, preaching the word in season, and out of season; and when they have done, they leave their work with the Lord, knowing that Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God only that gives the increase: and by the “ground”, into which it is cast, As meant the hearers of the word, who are of different sorts; some like the way side, others like the stony ground, and others like the thorny earth, and some like good ground, as here; whose hearts are broke up by the Spirit of God, the stoniness of them taken away, and they made susceptible of the good word.

**Ver. 27.** *And should sleep*, etc..] That is, the man that casts in the seed, who represents the ministers of the Gospel: and, as applied to them, is not to be understood of natural sleep, and indulging themselves in that; much less of spiritual sloth and indolence, as if they cared not what became of the seed sown, whether it sprung up, and came to any thing, or not; for neither of these belong to the characters of the true ministers of the word: for though bodily sleep in them, as in other men, is necessary for the support

of nature, and to put them in a capacity of discharging their work; yet perhaps none have less of it than studious and laborious preachers of the Gospel; and much less do they indulge a spiritual sleep and slothfulness; though this may sometimes attend them, as well as others: but then, whilst they sleep, in this sense, tares are sown, and they spring up, and not the good seed of the word, as in this parable; besides, as they labour in the word and doctrine, by studying and preaching it, so they follow their ministrations with incessant prayers that they be succeeded to the conversion of sinners, and comfort of saints; nor can they be easy, unless they have some seals of their ministry: but rather, this may be understood of the sleep of death; for so it often is, that the seed sown by them does not appear in the fruits of it to the churches of Christ, among whom they have ministered, until after they are fallen asleep in Jesus: though it seems best to understand it of their holy security, confidence, and satisfaction in their own minds, that it will turn to profit and advantage, both to the good of souls, and glory of God, not despairing of success; but having left their work with their Lord, they sit down easy and satisfied, believing that the word shall prosper to the thing whereunto it is sent:

*and rise night and day*; which shows their diligence and laboriousness, and their constant attendance to other parts of their work, rising up early, and sitting up late, to prepare for, and discharge their ministerial work; and their continued expectation of the springing-up of the seed sown, which accordingly does in proper time:

*and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how*; it is a mystery in nature, how the seed under the clods, where it dies before it is quickened, should spring and grow up, and bring forth fruit; and so it is in grace, how the word of God first operates on a sinner's heart, and becomes the ingrafted word there; the time when, and much less the manner how, grace, by this means, is implanted in the heart, are not known to a soul itself, and still less to the ministers of the word, who sometimes never know any thing of it; and when they do, not till some time after: this work is done secretly, and powerfully, under the influence of divine grace, without their knowledge, though by them as instruments; so that though the sowing and planting are theirs, all the increase is God's: this may encourage attendance on the ministry of the word, and teach us to ascribe the work of conversion entirely to the power and grace of God.

**Ver. 28.** *For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself*, etc..] Without any further help, or cultivation from the husbandman; though under the influence of the sun, dews, and showers of rain from heaven: this is said, not to denote that man of himself, upon hearing the word, can bring forth the fruit of grace in himself; he cannot regenerate himself, nor quicken, nor convert himself; he cannot believe in Christ, nor love the Lord of himself; nor repent of his sin, nor begin, or carry on the good work; he can neither sanctify his heart, nor mortify the deeds of the body; or even bring forth the fruits of good works, when converted. For all these things are owing to the Spirit, power, and grace of God: men are regenerated according to the abundant mercy of God, of water and of the Spirit, by the word of truth, through the sovereign will and pleasure of God; and they are quickened, who before were dead in trespasses and sins, and were as dry bones, by the Spirit of God breathing upon them: conversion in the first production, is the Lord's work; "turn thou me, and I shall be turned": faith in Christ is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; and so is repentance unto life; love is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and in short, the whole work of grace is not by might, nor by power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts; who begins and carries on, and performs it until the day of Christ: the work of sanctification, is therefore called the sanctification of the Spirit; and it is through him the deeds of the body are mortified: and indeed, without Christ, believers themselves can do nothing at all; even cannot perform good works, or do any action that is truly and spiritually good. But the design is to show, that as the earth without human power, without the husbandman, under the influence of the heavens, brings forth fruit; so without human power, without the Gospel minister, the word having taken root under divine influence, through the sun of righteousness, the dews of divine grace, and operations of the blessed Spirit, it rises up and brings forth fruit:

*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*; which, as it very aptly describes the progress of the seed from first to last; so it very beautifully represents the gradual increase of the work of grace, under the instrumentality of the word, accompanied with the Spirit and power of God. Grace at first appearance is very small, like the small green spire, when it first shoots out of the earth: light into a man's self, his heart, his state and condition, in the knowledge of Christ, and the doctrines of the Gospel, is but very small; he is one of little faith, and weak in the exercise of it: faith is but at first a small glimmering view of Christ, a venture upon

him, a peradventure there may be life and salvation for such an one in him; it comes at length to a reliance and leaning upon him; and it is some time before the soul can walk alone by faith on him: its experience of the love of God is but small, but in process of time there is a growth and an increase; light increases, which shines more and more unto the perfect day; faith grows stronger and stronger; experience of the love of God is enlarged; and the believer wades in these waters of the sanctuary; not only as at first up to the ankles, but to the knees and loins; when at length they are a broad river to swim in, and which cannot be passed over.

**Ver. 29.** *But when the fruit is brought forth*, etc..] Unto perfection, and is fully ripe; signifying that when grace is brought to maturity, and faith is performed with power, and the good work begun is perfected; then, as the husbandman,

*immediately he putteth the sickle*; and cuts it down, and gathers it in;

*because the harvest is come*; at death or at the end of the world, which the harvest represents: when all the elect of God are called by grace, and grace in them is brought to its perfection, and they have brought forth all the fruit they were ordained to bear, they will then be all gathered in; either by Christ himself who comes into his garden, and gathers his lilies by death; or by the angels, the reapers, at the close of time, who will gather the elect from the four winds; or the ministers of the Gospel, who shall come again with joy, bringing their sheaves with them; being able to observe with pleasure a greater increase, and more fruit of their labours, than they knew of, or expected.

**Ver. 30.** *And he said*, etc..] Still continuing his discourse on this subject, and in order to convey to the minds of his disciples clearer ideas of the Gospel dispensation, the success of the Gospel, and the usefulness of their ministration of it, for their encouragement, how unpromising soever things might then be:

*whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?* It was usual with the Jewish doctors, when about to illustrate anything in a parabolical way to begin with such like questions; as, **hmwd rbdh hml** , “to what is this thing like”<sup>f52</sup>? when the answer is to such or such thing, as here.

**Ver. 31.** *It is like a grain of mustard seed,* etc..] That is, the kingdom of God spoken of in the preceding verse, is like unto a grain of mustard seed; by which is meant, either the Gospel, or the Gospel church state, or the grace of God in the hearts of his people, and it may include them all: the Gospel is so called, because it treats of the two latter; but more especially, because it brings life and immortality to light, or points to the kingdom of heaven, directs the way unto it, and shows what qualifies persons for it, and gives them a claim unto it: and the Gospel church state may be so called, because here Christ dwells, and rules as king; the members of it are his subjects, and the ordinances of it are his laws, to which they are obedient: and the grace of God in the hearts of his people may be so called, because it is a governing principle in them; it reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, and by it Christ reigns in and over them: now the kingdom of God in each of these senses, may be compared to a grain of mustard seed, for the smallness of it, as follows;

*which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth.* The Gospel was first preached by very few persons, and these of no figure and account, especially at their first setting out. John the Baptist came preaching the kingdom of God, clothed with a garment of camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins; our Lord himself made no pompous appearance, there was no form nor comeliness in him; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, and of a mean descent and occupation; his disciples were fishermen, and illiterate persons; those to whom it was preached, and by whom it was received at first were but few, and these were the poor and the unlearned, and publicans and sinners. The Gospel church state at first, consisted of very few persons, of Christ and his twelve apostles; and at his death, the number of the disciples at Jerusalem, men and women, were but an hundred and twenty; the several Gospel churches formed in the Gentile world, rose from small beginnings; from the conversion of a very few persons, and these the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. The grace of God in the hearts of his people at first, is very little; it can scarcely be discerned by themselves, and is ready to be despised by others; their light and knowledge, their faith and experience being so exceeding small.

**Ver. 32.** *But when it is sown, it groweth up,* etc..] So the Gospel, when it was preached, it spread notwithstanding all the opposition made against it by, the Jews and Gentiles: there was no stopping it; though the Jewish sanhedrim charged the apostles to speak no more in the name of Jesus,



they regarded them not; though Herod stretched forth his hands against the church, and killed one apostle, and put another in prison, yet “the word of God grew and multiplied”, (<sup>401</sup>Acts 12:1-3,24), and Gospel churches when set up, whether in Judea, or among the Gentiles, presently had additions made unto them, and “grew up”, as holy temples in the Lord: and wherever the grace of God is really implanted, there is a growing in it, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus:

*and becometh greater than all herbs*: the Gospel exceeds the traditions of the Jews, and the philosophy of the Gentiles, and any human scheme whatever, in its nature, usefulness, and the largeness of its spread: and the Gospel church state will ere long fill the world, and all nations shall flow unto it; when the Jews shall be converted, and the fulness of the Gentiles shall come, it will be a greater kingdom, than any of the kingdoms of the earth ever were: and the grace of God in the heart, is vastly above nature, and does that which nature can never perform; and which spreads and enlarges, and at last issues in eternal glory:

*and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it*: by whom are meant, saints; such to whom the Gospel is come in power, and who have the grace of God wrought in their hearts, who are partakers of the heavenly calling: these come where the Gospel is preached, and where gracious souls are met together, even in the several Gospel churches; where they not only come and go, but where they lodge, abide, and continue, under the shadow of the Gospel, and Gospel ordinances, and that with great delight and pleasure; singing songs of praise to God, for his electing and redeeming love, and for calling grace, and for all spiritual blessings, and Gospel privileges: for a larger explanation and illustration of this parable, (see Gill on <sup>403</sup>Matthew 13:31-32”).

**Ver. 33.** *And with many such parables*, etc..] As those of the tares, of the leaven in three measures of meal, of the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea, and of the Scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God; which though not related at length here, are by the Evangelist Matthew, in (<sup>403</sup>Matthew 13:24-30,33,44-50,52) together with others elsewhere:

*spake he the word unto them*; preached the Gospel to the multitude,



*as they were able to hear it:* meaning either that he condescended to their weakness, accommodated himself to their capacities, and made use of the plainest similes; and took his comparison from things in nature, the most known and obvious, that what he intended might more easily be understood; or rather, he spoke the word to them in parables, as they were able to hear, without understanding them; and in such a manner, on purpose that they might not understand; for had he more clearly expressed the things relating to himself, as the Messiah, and to the Gospel dispensation, so as that they could have took in his meaning, such were their pride, their wickedness, and the rancour of their minds, that they would have at once rose up, and attempted to have destroyed him.

**Ver. 34.** *But without a parable spake he not unto them,* etc..] For the above reason, as well as for the accomplishment of Scripture; (see Gill on “<sup><4134></sup>Matthew 13:34-35”).

*And when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples:* after they returned with him from the sea side, to the house in Capernaum, where he usually was when there; (see <sup><4135></sup>Matthew 13:36). The multitude being dismissed, he unfolded and explained all these parables to his disciples, and led them into a large knowledge of himself, and the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; whereby they were furnished for the work he had called them to, and designed them for.

**Ver. 35.** *And the same day, when the even was come,* etc..] After he had finished his parables among the multitude, and had explained them to his disciples:

*he saith unto them;* his disciples,

*let us pass over unto the other side:* that is, of the sea of Galilee, or lake of Gennesaret, to the country of the Gadarenes, and Gergesenes; with a view for retirement and rest, after the fatigue of the day; and for the trial of the faith of his disciples, by a storm which he knew would arise, whilst they were on the sea; and for the sake of a miracle he was to work on the other side, after related.

**Ver. 36.** *And when they had sent away the multitude,* etc..] Who had been attending him all day on the sea shore; though they seem to have been dismissed by Christ, when he went into the house, and privately interpreted the parables to his disciples: (see <sup><4136></sup>Matthew 13:36), wherefore it is possible, that upon Christ's going to the sea shore again, in order to take

boat for the other side, they might gather together the disciples acquainted them that he was not about to preach any more to them, but was going to the other side of the lake; upon which they departed: and

*they took him even as he was in the ship*; which may be understood of his being taken and carried in the ship, in which he had been preaching all the day, without being moved into another; though this does not so well agree with his quitting that, and going home to his house in Capernaum; where, being alone with the disciples, he opened the parables to them. Some think it refers to the situation and posture in which he laid himself, as soon as he entered the ship; placing himself at the stern, and laying his head upon a pillow there, and so they carried him: others, that they took him into the ship, as he was alone without the multitude, who were sent away, only the disciples with him, which seems best:

*and there were also with him other little ships*; or boats, that were in company with that, in which Christ was; and had in them either seafaring men upon business, taking fish, or carrying passengers over; or might have in them persons, who were going along with Christ to the other side: these seem to be ordered in providence to be in company, that they might be witnesses of the after miracle.

**Ver. 37.** *And there arose a great storm of wind*, etc..] Called Laelaps, a wind that is suddenly whirled about upwards and downwards, and is said to be a storm, or tempest of wind with rain; it was a sort of a hurricane:

*and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was full*; of water, and ready to sink. Beza in one copy it read, *βυψιζεσψαι*, and so in one of Stephens's. It was immersed, covered all over with water, and was going down at once to the bottom; so that they were in imminent danger, in the utmost extremity; (see Gill on “~~4082~~ Matthew 8:24”).

**Ver. 38.** *And he was in the hinder part of the ship*, etc..] That is, Christ was in the stern of the ship: the Persic version renders it, “he was in the bottom of the ship, in a corner”, but very wrongly; here he was

*asleep on a pillow*, which some say was a wooden one, framed at the stern: however, he was fast asleep on it, being greatly fatigued with the work of the day; (see Gill on “~~4082~~ Matthew 8:24”).

*And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?* The disciples came to him and jogged him, and awoke him out of

sleep; saying, Master, arise, and save us, or we are lost: hast thou no concern for us? how canst thou lie sleeping here, when we are in such danger? are our lives of no account with thee? is it a matter of no moment with thee, whether we are saved or lost? They seem to say this, not so much praying and interrogating, as complaining and reproving.

**Ver. 39.** *And he arose and rebuked the wind*, etc..] He arose from off his pillow, and stood up; and in a majestic and authoritative way reproved the wind, as if it was a servant that had exceeded his commission; at which he shows some resentment:

*and said unto the sea, peace, be still*; as if that which was very tumultuous and boisterous, and threatened with shipwreck and the loss of lives, had raged too much and too long:

*and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm*; which was very unusual and extraordinary; for after the wind has ceased, and the storm is over, the waters of the sea being agitated thereby, keep raging, and in a violent motion, for a considerable time; whereas here, as soon as ever the word was spoken, immediately, at once, the wind ceased, and the sea was calmed: a clear proof this, that he must be the most high God, who gathers the winds in his fists, and stills the noise of the seas and their waves.

**Ver. 40.** *And he said unto them*, etc..] His disciples,

*why are ye so fearful?* since he was with them in person, whose power to keep and preserve them, they had no room to question, when they reflected on the miracles they had so lately seen performed by him:

*how is it that ye have no faith?* That is, in exercise: faith they had, but it was very small, and scarcely to be called faith: they did indeed apply to him to save them, which showed some faith in him, but then they feared it was too late, and that they were past all hope, and were just perishing; (see Gill on "<sup>40:3</sup>Matthew 8:26").

**Ver. 41.** *And they feared exceedingly*, etc..] That is, the men in the ship, the mariners to whom the ship belonged, and who had the management of it:

*and said to one another*, as persons in the greatest amazement,

*what manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?* Surely this person must not be a mere man; he must be more than a man;

he must be truly God, that has such power over the wind and sea. This best suits with the mariners, since the disciples must have known before, who and what he was; though they might be more established and confirmed in the truth of Christ's deity, by this wonderful instance of his power.