**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, February 19, 2021**

Good afternoon!

I can still remember standing behind the doctor as he viewed the X-Ray on the large screen when my dad was in the hospital. He was 91 years of age. The doctor said, “In all my years of medicine, your father has the biggest heart I have ever seen.” Of course, the doctor was speaking physically due to my dad’s condition of congestive heart failure, however, I took it differently. I thought, you know in many ways what the doctor is saying is very true. Dad truly did have a big heart in so many special ways. Exteriors don’t always reflect interiors! You see in more ways than one my dad had the biggest heart I have ever seen! He just liked to cover it up a lot with a tough exterior.

What is the condition of your heart, not physically but spiritually speaking? You see, one may keep you physically alive for 91 years, but the other will move you into glory with God eternally!

From Mark chapter 4 we find four types of heart conditions.

1. Resistant or hard soil heart: Jesus says, “Listen to this! …and it came about that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.” v.4 In Palestine, the land was divided into small lots. There were no fences only narrow paths separating the different spaces that needed to be seeded. It was not uncommon for some seed, as it was being spread, to fall on the hard-packed paths that divided the land. The point is that the seed that falls on top of hard soil cannot take root and will soon be trampled or taken away altogether! Why? No penetration! Jesus makes the application point, “And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.” v.15. Notice that these people do hear the word! But like the hard-packed ground, their heart doesn’t take it in. Somehow the word of God gets intellectualized but never internalized! The result is that Satan, the seed snatcher, comes and takes it away! Folks, hard soil can become good soil! It begins with giving God the green light in every area of our hearts. Let the word of God penetrate your heart!

2. Short-sighted or rocky soil heart: Jesus says, “And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil… no depth of soil…after the sun had risen, it was scorched… because it had no root, it withered away.” 5-6. Some years back in my garden, I noticed that there was a section where the plants started off really good but then began to wither. It turned out that there was a huge flat stone not far below the surface. Jesus makes the point here that these are “the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy… then when affliction or persecution arises… immediately they fall away.” v.17 Listen, I know you can’t respond to Jesus with too much enthusiasm! But Christianity is not a new craze or fad like a paper fire that starts up fast but fizzles out quickly when times of testing come. Can you remember your excitement when you first came to Christ? You may have been so fired up that you believed that you could put hell out with a water pistol! Are you still there? If not, it’s time to smash the rock barriers of this world’s discouragements and recapture the excitement and joy of Jesus!

3. Distracted or thorny soil heart: Jesus said, “And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it.” v.7 The biggest problem I had in my garden was the weeds! When I would enter my garden to check on the vegetable plants, I could almost hear them crying out, “Help, we’re being strangled by the weeds!” The plants were always in competition with the weed for the water and nutrients from the ground. This is why the Lord said, “And others… sown among the thorns…. The worries of the world… deceitfulness of riches… and desires for other things enter in and choke the word…” v.18-19 Luke says, it will “bring no fruit to maturity.” Luke 8:14. You see, a distracted heart never matures! As life goes on, some Christians age but never grow up! What is it that crowds out your spiritual life? Whatever it is, it’s time to let it go!

4. Receptive or good soil heart: Jesus concludes with, “And other seeds fell into the good soil… yielding a crop… thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” v.8 Remember, Satan is powerless against good soil! The key to developing a good soil heart is remembering that “they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit…” v.20. James 1:21 says, “receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” Preserving good soil takes hard work! It takes deliberate and intentional action! When the evil one comes to snatch the word away, throws stones of affliction or persecution your way, or brings thorns of worry and more to your heart, your response is to battle back with good soil, deep roots, and strong faith! A good friend once said the strongest oaks grow where the hardest winds blow! Let’s grow deep, it will result in a very big heart for God!

Blessings,

Mike