

“Attacks on Assurance”
(Matthew 13:18-23)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, saw
Enemy tries to weaken us
By taking away assurance –
Our confidence that saved –
To get us caught up
Into settling question of personal safety
So won't serve Lord,
And threaten his kingdom.

It's important to know we are safe:

How can we?

Only way is if know

Have God's Spirit;

And can only know that

If see His fruit in lives:

Which is primarily love,

Love for holiness/what is good.

If have that, then

Will love God,

Receive His revelation in nature –

Not suppress,

But glory in it –

And His revelation in His Word/Gospel –

We'll love His Son,

Trust Him –

Receive Him

As our Savior –

And follow Him as our Lord.

The Spirit's work is

To make us like Jesus –

When we see that happening

Know are His.

This is the fruit

Jesus speaks of in Parable.

It's not enough to do right thing –

Scribes and Pharisees prove

Can do right things for wrong reasons –

Must do what's right

With right motive –

Because we love the Lord.

If you're trusting Jesus alone,

And walking in His ways,

Because that's what want to do

In heart of hearts, then saved.

But also noted this morning
 That our love isn't perfect –
 We're full of flaws,
 And so enemy will exploit these
 To shut us up into cage of doubt.

This evening,
 Let's look at some of these attacks,
 And how to overcome them.

This Parable suggests at least four
 That parallel the four responses to the Gospel.

II. Sermon.

A. First, that we're not affected by the Gospel:

13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."

He's speaking in the first three cases
 Of what happens in heart of unbelievers –
 But these things can happen in our hearts as well,
 And when they do, the enemy will attack.

In the first,
 There are those who hear Gospel,
 But don't understand it –
 Either what it means,
 Or how anyone could believe it:
 Don't see its worth/how precious –

So devil takes it away –

Distracts them with world,

So the encounter fades –

It's not as if the Word has no effect –

They do grow harder:

The soil of heart was hard to begin with –

Which is why didn't penetrate –

But now it's even more compacted.

The net result is

Gospel doesn't bear any fruit –

The fruit of holiness:

They don't love it,

So don't trust Jesus,

And obey Him.

We have to hear, understand, respond to Gospel –

Trust Jesus and follow Him –

If we're to be saved.

There must be *some* fruit.

Luke 8:15 “But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, *and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.*”

John 15:1-2, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.”

If there's none –

Even no faith –

Then we don't know Jesus.

How often something similar happen to us?

Hear Word,

But lose what hear –

Maybe we don't understand,

Don't agree,

Don't see its importance,

Don't remember it,

Aren't unaffected by it,

Don't do it –

Don't bear any fruit.

Each time Lord speaks to us,

He does to change us:

To make us a bit more like Him.

But maybe that isn't happening –

We're not changing,

We stay the same.

Does this mean we're in this first category?

That we really don't know the Lord?

Satan will suggest this.

Only way to refute him

Is to see fruit:

True love,

Faith in Jesus,

Obedience.

If there is any at all

We're safe.

But does bring up important point:

We don't benefit from Word

As much as should.

We too often forget:

College Professor: better forgettery than memory.

Even when try to remember,

Can still forget

Because there's only so much can retain.

Frame: Seminary banqueting table, plate, 20%.

Goal should be to gain as much,

And lose as little as possible of what hear –

As the Jews,

Who didn't have copies of Scriptures,

But trained memories to hold onto

What heard in synagogue

So could benefit during the week.

B. Second, that we're affected by the Gospel,

But fall away when things get difficult.

vv. 20-21, “The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.”

In Parable,

Among the four,

Are three that receive Gospel

1. In the first of the three,

They receive it –

Appear to receive Jesus –

Their reception even makes them happy –

They receive it with joy –

But turn away when cost gets too high –

There are many examples:

How many Jews bowed down

To Nebuchadnezzar’s statue?

How many professed to know Jesus

During time of Roman persecution

But denied when would cost their lives?

They loved their lives more than Him.

If don’t really love Lord,

Won’t be willing to suffer for Him –

If we’re not willing to suffer,

We don’t know Him.

Have there been times

When we've denied Him

In far less threatening circumstances?

Around family, friends, people at work –

We had chance to speak,

Felt the obligation,

But kept silent –

Because of how we thought

They'd respond?

When that's happened,

Didn't Satan accuse?

“How can you be a Christian?

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego

Didn't compromise when threatened with furnace –

“Hebrews 11 full of those who suffered,

Even died,

Rather than compromise –

“Isn't the willingness to die for Jesus

The evidence that you belong to Him?

Doesn't John say in Revelation 12:11, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, *and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*”

And yet you're not willing to stand a little abuse?!”

It's true, we should stand –

He's commanded us to stand;

He's given ability to stand –

We know we want to stand,

But sometimes we don't –

If we're always silent,

If always fail,

Should examine our hearts –

Do we really love Him?

His attack can be even more severe,

If we fall further from Him.

“He's shown you so much love;

But you turned your back on Him:

He won't forgive you;

Isn't it true that Esau,

After he sold birthright,

Couldn't find repentance,

Even though sought with tears?”

When that happens, remember:

Peter denied Jesus three times.

John Mark abandoned the mission field.

Many who were true believers

Buckled under Roman persecution,

But later repented and were received again.

Question is:

Repented?

Love Him now?

Determined to stand?

Failure can actually make us stronger:

Both Peter and John Mark were better,

As well as those under Roman persecution.

Lord will work even this for our good.

2. Sometimes, devil goes different direction:

“So many hard things happening,

“So much persecution,

“God doesn’t love you;

“Can’t be saved;

Might as well stop following/pretending to be Christian.”

We should be more concerned if aren’t suffering.

Jesus said, “In the world you have tribulation” (John 16:33).

Paul wrote, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Lord uses to discipline/instruct:

Hebrews 12:6-8, “‘FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

Remember Job.

3. Sometime, devil will try to convince

We won’t hold up under suffering –

That we'll fall away.

But that won't happen:

If belong to Him,

We will persevere,

Because He will hold onto us.

"I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

"*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

C. Third, we're affected by the Gospel,

But our desire for this world so strong

We never get down to doing

What the Lord saved us to do.

13:22, "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Our Lord tells us not to love the world:

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

It's lure/pull is so strong

Can actually keep us from entering the kingdom.

Mark 10:25, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

That's why if come to Jesus

Must be willing to give up everything to Him:

Said to the crowds, Luke 14:33, “None of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

That’s also why He gives us the ability by His Spirit:

Matthew 13:44-46, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Are many today

Who claim to love Jesus,

But instead of serving Him,

Use Him to get rich.

Many more set Him aside

When He gets in way

Of their getting something

They want from this world.

Have there been times

When we’ve compromised –

When set aside what we know is right,

To pursue something –

Whether good or bad –

That if we were faithful,

We could never have?

Have we been unwilling

To let go of our dreams

That will lead us away

From the Lord and His kingdom?

We've all compromised

At one time or another,

And Satan's been there to accuse us.

If that's all we do –

Compromise –

And never repent –

We are thorny ground hearers:

We don't know Him.

But if we have compromised,

And have turned to Him again,

Because we really do love Him more than the world,

We belong to Him.

We're not perfect.

There's still a lot of sin in our hearts.

We will be tempted by the world.

We may sometimes fall to it,

Maybe many times;

But the Good Shepherd

Will always seek us

And bring us back,

Because, as we've seen,

He will never lose us.

D. Finally, we receive the Gospel and bear fruit –

As saw this morning –

But in differing amounts.

13:23, “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Satan can use this to accuse us as well:

“You’re only thirty,

While others are sixty,

Or even a hundred.

“You’re not doing as much as could.

Others have done so much more –

You’re nothing in comparison.

“Do you really love the Lord?

Do you really know Him?”

When that happens,

Need to remember

Only reason there’s any fruit

Is because of His grace –

If there is fruit, there is grace:

We are saved.

There are many reasons

We bear different amounts:

Some are outside our control,

And entirely in the Lord’s hands.

He's given us all different gifts:

Spurgeon had a photographic memory.

Edwards was a genius.

Whitefield a natural orator.

Wesley a strong constitution.

We have different callings:

Some lend themselves more

To bearing fruit for the kingdom,

Such as missionary work.

Some are given divinely ordained opportunities.

They were put by the Lord

In a specific place,

At specific time,

To do a specific job,

That reverberates down to the present:

John Calvin wanted to live quiet life of a scholar,

But necessity compelled him to return to Geneva,

To become a leader in the Reformation.

But there are also things in our control:

Like what we do with what He's given us:

With our time;

Our strength;

Our resources;

How much time in Word, prayer, worship;

Whether we're working to overcome our fears;

Putting our worldliness to death;

Trying to do more.

All of us could do more,

If we really wanted.

That's what we need to do.

In closing, need to understand

There's a reason Lord allows Satan to attack:

He knows our weaknesses,

And wants us to overcome them.

If He's used the devil to expose them,

We can be sure He wants us to work on them –

To close the breaches,

So we'll be stronger in Him,

That we might serve Him better.

May He give us His grace to do so,

That we might have more of His Spirit,

And a stronger assurance,

That we might do more for Him. Amen.