

## Commentary on Matthew 13.

What could be the reason our prayers are not answered at times, and what is God's desire for our lives?

We will look at a passage in Matthew 13:10-15 and meditate on what the Lord wants us to know through it. Sometimes, passages that appear to be complex or puzzling are there to let us know something important. What we learn from such passages though, **must be confirmed by other passages found in the Scriptures.** They are not there to tell us something completely different or new in itself. They are there to get our attention to what is important and to emphasize certain parts of the Scriptures according to what God wants to tell us.

<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

<sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup> For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,  
And seeing you will see and not perceive;

<sup>15</sup> For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

*Their ears are hard of hearing,*

*And their eyes they have closed,*

*Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,*

*Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,*

*So that I should heal them.’ (Matthew 13:10-15)*

This passage comes straight after Jesus told the parable of the sower, which is one of the main parables in the New Testament. It talks about a sower who went to sow his seed, which falls on four different types of ground representing four different kinds of hearts. Some seeds fell on the wayside, others on stony places

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and among thorns, and others on good ground where it produced fruit. Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Straight after this parable, the disciples asked Him why is that He talks to people in parables. It looked like He was hiding their meaning. The scripture we read above is the answer Jesus gave them. He cited Isaiah's prophecy, saying those people will hear but will not understand, will see but not perceive because their hearts have grown dull. The last phrase of this verse says: "Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, so that I should heal them."

The part of the verse saying: "Lest they should see", and "lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, so that I should heal them", sounds like He didn't want to let them see and heal them. This might look strange as someone might wonder why God doesn't want to heal or help someone. It is not exactly in this way because we know God desires to do that. By healing, we are not just talking of healing a disease but also of solving a problem or situation we might have. God wants to do that. To solve our situation (in His way, obviously), to open our eyes so we can see the biblical truths. Still, there is something more important, which He gives the main priority. He is also saying why is that He doesn't open their eyes and ears and heal them. V. 15 starts with the phrase "For the hearts of this people have grown dull". This was the main reason. Their hearts. The parable of the sower deals with four different types of ground representing four types of hearts. One of them is hard and unbelieving. This is where the problem is. This is the heart that doesn't believe and consequently doesn't understand. So, because their hearts have grown dull, they also cannot see, hear, or get healed.

This is the reason why He doesn't open their eyes and doesn't heal them. Let's suppose He could have opened their eyes, let them understand, and therefore healed them, but without the most important part – believing in His name and having a sensitive heart to His word. He is God, and He could do it. Yet, He doesn't do it because He knows that to believe is the most important part. Why? Because faith connects us with Him, and by faith, we are saved. He looks beyond what we can see. We usually look at what is here on earth while He looks at eternity. He is

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the one who knows what is best for us, and this is to be saved and to be eternally with Him. We often neglect that part and focus only on what we achieve here and the blessings here in this life. We need to trust Him because His primary desire for us is to be saved. This is what He desires for every person. Still, we know that not all will believe. There is no purpose for Him to open someone's eyes and heal him without faith. That person would miss the most important. That's why sometimes he doesn't heal or answer a prayer. He does it for our good. Because when that person sees that he is not healed or does not get an answer, he would start examining himself where the problem is, and one of the problems might be that he doesn't have faith or needs to repent. In this way, he would start looking to have faith and solve that part of his life. And this is the most important because in this way we are saved.

Just imagine if He healed a person without faith. Then, that person will be happy with what he has received but will not look for the most important, which is faith. In the end, he will not be saved. This is the reason why He closes up the heavens sometimes and doesn't send His rain. So that people could examine themselves.

“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.” (1 Kings 8:35, 36)

This passage in 1 Kings fits perfectly with what we are talking about. Here, it is pointed out the need for repentance. This is almost always one of the main things we need to have the heavens open for us. Drought and lack of rain were an often occurrence in the Old Testament, and it might still happen. Still, today, in the NT times, it is more common that He closes the rain of His presence and blessings. But why? Because He loves us and wants us to change. For this reason, He closes the eyes and the ears of people and doesn't heal them. In a way, this is for their good. So that a person can see something is not right with him and ask himself:

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“Why is it that my prayers don’t get answered?”, “Do I really believe?”, “Am I sincere enough?”, “What is preventing me from seeing and understanding? In this way, a person examines himself. The issue might be a lack of faith, a need for repentance, or a need for perseverance. Whatever it is, He wants to show it to us, and this sometimes happens when we examine our lives.

When we ask something from God in a prayer, there might be various reasons why He doesn’t answer it. It might be that what we ask is not the right thing for us, and we ask it with the wrong attitude. The other reason might be that it is not the right time for us to receive it, but another reason we need to consider, as we already mentioned above, is that we might not have enough faith. This is the case presented to us in the passages we are discussing. We need, however, to consider all these options and to examine well what the reason might be. It is not the same for each person. What happens through this process of examination, fighting in prayer by keeping on asking and doubting, which sometimes comes after receiving a negative answer to our petition, is a growth in our faith. This is also His purpose for us. He wants us to grow in faith. At the end of the day, this is much more valuable than many other things, even than what we asked for in prayer from God. We just don’t realize it. Still, He knows it, and He knows what is really important for us.

Healing, finding a solution to our problems, and understanding His word are also in His plan for us, but first, a person needs to believe. This is what the parable of the sower is about – having a soft heart that believes. This is the heart that also understands His word. We always thought that when someone understands, then he believes. I believe that it often goes the other way; we first believe, and then we begin understanding. Understanding what His word is about and understanding His promises. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). When we start believing, we are often pushed by our need, not by what we understand. So, the key to healing is understanding, the key to understanding is seeing and hearing (with our spiritual eyes and ears), and the key to seeing is having faith. This is the order we see in the Bible. Notice the order in which it is placed in Matthew 13:14, 15.

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<sup>14</sup> And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,  
And seeing you will see and not perceive;

<sup>15</sup> **For the hearts of this people have grown dull.**

*Their* ears are hard of hearing,  
And their eyes they have closed,  
Lest they should **see** with *their* eyes and **hear** with *their* ears,  
Lest they should **understand** with *their* hearts and turn,  
So that I should **heal** them.' (emphasis added)

This is the order it needs to go. V.15 starts with the root of the problem – “The hearts of this people have grown dull”. This indicates an unbelieving heart. First, we believe, then we see, understand, and get healed. This is what happens most of the time, and it is not the other way around. Another passage that shows us something similar is John 20:29.

“Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed.””

Here, Jesus showed Himself to Thomas, who was doubting in Him, but told him as well that those who have believed without seeing are blessed. This means that we first must believe, and then the rest, like seeing and receiving something, will come. It is not like the world, and most people expect it. They usually want first to receive and to see. That’s why it might look difficult to someone, and he can ask: “How is it that I will believe then?”. Well, in this case, it will be our need that can ignite our faith. Of course, God needs to work in us for that to happen, but the Bible indicates that we must be needy in front of Him. “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)

Why is faith so important? Because faith connects us with Him, and by faith, we are saved. God is interested in our eternity. He looks much beyond what we can see. We are usually interested in what we can receive in this life most of the time. He instead carries about our eternity. That’s why He wants us to have faith.

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He is the one who opens our eyes and ears to understand, and He heals us, but He wants us first to believe. That's why He also sometimes places a veil on our eyes and closes doors in front of us. So that we can strive to believe, acknowledge our need in a more profound way, and depend on Him. He does it for our good.

Otherwise, we could miss the most important thing – faith. Faith is the one that leads us to Him and eternity. In Matthew 11:25, 26, it is said:

“At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”  
(Matthew 11:25, 26)

Here, it is said that He has hidden these things from the wise and prudent but has revealed them to babes. By “babes”, we understand children. Jesus said that we need to become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). Not childish, but to have one of their qualities. This quality is “to believe”. Children are simple, and they don't have problems believing. This doesn't mean we are against intelligence; it just means we are more open to believing. It is by faith, and it is not based on what we see or can comprehend with our logic. We first believe, then we begin understanding, and after that, our eyes are opened.

God the Father wants to give us all things necessary for us.

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

The Bible says that He has plans to give us hope and future (Jeremiah 29:11). This is in His plan for us, but first is His Kingdom. This comprehends what is spiritual and eternal. The salvation of our souls. That's why the entire chapter of Romans 8 is directed to the believers, to those who already know Christ and seek Him first. Matthew 6:33 says: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” This means that seeking first the Kingdom is essential, and the rest comes after that. Then, we can seek healing, a solution, or whatever else we need, knowing anyway that God knows what is best for us.

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This doesn't exclude the fact that we can still ask Him for something we need. We can do that, but our major petition should be about His kingdom and our spiritual needs.

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”  
(Psalm 37:4)

This verse tells us that if we find our delight in the Lord, He can give us the desires of our hearts. Finding the delight in the Lord means that we seek and find Him in our lives, that we delight in Him and His presence. Not only in the things that He can provide for us. This is what His Kingdom is about. Then, He will accomplish the desire of our hearts. He will accomplish it in what is obviously right and in His way.

Another passage indicating that He looks for the faith first before anything else is the one in Mark 2:1-12.

<sup>1</sup> And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. <sup>2</sup> Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup> Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. <sup>4</sup> And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

<sup>6</sup> And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

<sup>8</sup> But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” —He said

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to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." <sup>12</sup> Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

Here, we see a situation of a paralytic that was brought to Jesus. Everyone would know what that paralytic was brought to Jesus for. I don't know if they asked Him to heal that man, but even without asking Him, it was obvious why he was brought to Jesus. Jesus instead does something that no one was expecting. He approached that man's spiritual need and condition, telling him his sins were forgiven. This is because that was the most important and what that man needed before anything else. After that, he also received healing. This story just shows us what is most important for God and what we need first. We need our sins to be forgiven. This can be obtained by faith only. That's why the Bible says that by faith, we are saved. We are saved first of all because our sins are forgiven. This is what Christ died for. This happens when we ask him with faith to forgive us. When talking of faith, therefore, the Bible doesn't just mean having faith that God exists. This is, of course, important and part of the faith, but having faith to receive forgiveness of our sins is the most essential. Many people believe there is some power above us and that maybe someone created everything. Still, they might not know what they actually believe in. It is the same as when Paul, visiting Athens, found an altar with the inscription "THE UNKNOWN GOD". The people from Athens were worshiping this god amongst all their other gods. They didn't know him. This is the God who created everything we see, live, and move in. The matter is that we can know Him. He offers us to have a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. We just need to have faith. Not the faith only that He exists but the faith that He can forgive sins. This is the faith the Bible talks about. This is the reason why Jesus came for – to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the way someone needs to approach Jesus first – asking for forgiveness. Same as it happened to the paralytic. His sins were forgiven first.



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How could we get to the condition of acknowledging our need for God and having faith? By asking God to help us. By asking Him to forgive us. It happens when He works in our lives. There are no people who are better than others and naturally have a good heart. The Bible says that we all have a heart of stone, and we all are sinners. Sin, which is what we have in common, makes our hearts be of stone.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26)

In this verse, God says that He will remove the heart of stone those people were having and give them hearts of flesh. Soft hearts that could feel and believe. This is not only for the people of that time but for all of us. Only He can make this miracle and make our hearts soft, so that we can believe. Therefore, we see that this is the natural condition of man, and no one has a believing heart because of his capabilities or strength. This is how our hearts become like the heart of the fourth ground in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. We all naturally belong to the other group of hearts, and by faith and with God's help, we can have the heart that pleases God. So, we need to have faith to become good ground. This good ground's fruits testify of God's capability to change someone's heart.