

# Thorns, tests, tempests – & transformation

## a. Fruitful vs. fruitless hearers – & patience (how's your heart?) (8:1-18)

### 8:1-3 How is the fruit of Christ's ministry already manifest?

[1] [8:1-3] There is no mention of synagogues and it may well be that increasing hostility on the part of the synagogue establishment led Him to concentrate on preaching and teaching in the open air. ... On this occasion He was accompanied by the Twelve and by some women whom He had healed. The rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place. ... And it is worth reflecting that the Gospels record no woman as ever taking action against Him: His enemies were all men. **L. Morris** Luke pp.149, 150

[2] [8:1-3] We can well imagine that the difficulties these holy women had to face in becoming Christ's disciples were neither few nor small. They had their full share of the contempt and scorn which was poured on all followers of Jesus ... They had, besides, many a trial from the hard speeches and hard usage which any Jewish woman who thought for herself about religion would probably have to undergo. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p. 244

### 8:4-8 Though they did not understand the full application of the parable, what frightening lesson should have communicated itself merely by the familiarity of the picture? (Isaiah 5:1-7)

[3] [8:4-8] The parable bears a close resemblance to the fable: but it differs from it in two respects, one of substance, the other of form. While the fable refers to the relations of men with one another, and to the moral laws which regulate these relations, the parable deals with man's relations with God, and with the lofty principles by which they are governed. The loftier sphere in which the parable moves determines the difference of form which distinguishes it from the fable. The fable partakes of a humorous character; it is quite allowable, therefore, in it to make plants and animals speak. The aim of the parable is too serious to comport with such fictions. There must be nothing in the picture to violate probability. Animals and material objects may be employed in the parable (sheep, leaven); but they must not assume a character contrary to their actual nature. The parable was the most natural mode of teaching for Jesus to adopt. Living in the incessant contemplation of the

divine world, which lay open to His inward sense, finding Himself at the same time also in constant intercourse with the external world, which He observed with intelligent and calm attention. He was necessarily led to make constant comparisons of these two spheres, and to perceive the innumerable analogies which exist between them. **Frederic Godet** Luke p.234

**8:9-11 What is the force of the word 'mystery' in the New Testament? Is there anything mysterious about the Lord's teaching regarding fruitful discipleship? (Note the awful weight the NT gives to this Isaiah passage - Isa.6:9; cf. Matthew 13; Eph.1:3-10, esp. v.9)**

“... it is worth reflecting that the Gospels record no woman as ever taking action against Him: His enemies were all men.”

— **Leon Morris**

**8:12-15 ALL the players in the parable HEAR! 3 possibilities face the heedless hearer: 1. Leaving space for Satan; 2. rootlessness; 3. fruitlessness. How can we become doers of the word, and not hearers only? (Jam.1:19-27)**

[4] [8:13] The seed of the word springs up immediately, as soon as they hear it, and bears a crop of joyful impressions, and pleasurable emotions. But these impressions, unhappily, are only on the surface. There is no deep and abiding work done in their souls. And hence, so soon as the scorching heat of temptation or persecution begins to be felt, the little bit of religion which they seemed to have attained, withers and vanishes away. Feelings, no doubt, fill a most important office in our personal Christianity. Without them there can be no saving religion. Hope, and joy, and peace, and confidence, and resignation, and love, and fear, are things which must be felt, if they really exist. But it must never be forgotten that there are religious affections, which are spurious and false, and spring from nothing better than animal excitement. It is quite possible to feel great pleasure, or deep alarm, under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet to be utterly destitute of the grace of God. The tears of some hearers of sermons, and the extravagant delight of others, are no certain marks of conversion. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p. 251

### ‘While we live we are all upon our trial’

[7] The Lord Jesus Christ is continually proving His Church at the present day. No doubt it would be easy for Him to convert the Chinese or Hindoos in a moment, and to call grace into being with a word, as he created light on the first day of this world's existence. But He does not do so ... He lets Christians be fellow workers with Him, that He may prove who are the covetous and unbelieving, and who are truly “rich towards God.” In short, the visible Church of Christ may be divided into two great parties,

those who “minister” to Christ, and those who do not. May we all remember this great truth and prove our own selves! While we live we are all upon our trial. Our lives are continually showing whose we are and whom we serve, whether we love Christ or whether we love the world. Happy are they who know something of “ministering to Christ of their substance!” **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p. 246

[5] [8:4-15] Let us leave the parable with a deep sense of the danger and responsibility of all hearers of the Gospel. There are four ways in which we may hear, and of these four only one is right. There are three kinds of hearers whose souls are in imminent peril. How many of these three kinds are to be found in every congregation! There is only one class of hearers which is right in the sight of God. And what are we? Do we belong to that one? **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p. 253

### 8:16-18 An awful possibility - even the hearer can

#### lose his treasure! How? (James 1:16-19, 23-25)

[6] [8:18] If a man is physically fit and keeps himself so, his body will be ready for ever greater efforts; if he lets himself go flabby, he will lose even the abilities he has. The more a student learns, the more he can learn; but if he refuses to go on learning, he will lose the knowledge he has. This is just another way of saying that here is no standing still in life. All the time we are either going forward or going back. The seeker will always find; but the man who stops seeking will lose even what he has. **William Barclay** *Luke* p. 102

## b. Tests & tempests: Who are *really* related to Christ? (8:19-40)

### 8:19-21 A hard lesson for those who think of vertical relationship defined by horizontal – i.e. family values define Christian priorities! (John 8:37-43)

[8] [8:19-21] This does not mean that family ties are unimportant or can be ignored: Jesus is not disowning His family. He thought of His mother even when He hung on the cross in the agony of achieving the world's redemption (Jn. 19:26f.). His meaning is that our duty to God takes precedence of everything else. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 154

### 8:22-25 This passage, as well as any in the NT, illustrates the undogmatic method by which the Father reveals the Son to those whose eyes and ears are opened (cf. John 9:25,30,33-41)

### 8:26-30 What is the great lesson for those who exalt humanism and the perfectibility of man apart from the rule of God? (i.e. - is the only direction man can go upward? See Daniel chapters 2, 4, 7, 8)

[9] [8:26-36] Cases of bodily possession by Satan, like this, are, to say the least, very rarely met with in modern times. Yet we must not, on this account, forget that the devil is continually exercising a fearful power over many hearts and souls. He still urges many, in whose hearts he reigns, into self-dishonouring and self-destroying habits of life. He still rules many

with a rod of iron, goads them on from vice to vice, and from profligacy to profligacy, drives them far from decent society, and the influence of respectable friends, plunges them into the lowest depths of wickedness, makes them little better than self-murderers, and renders them as useless to their families, the Church, and the world, as if they were dead, and not alive. Where is the faithful minister who could not put his finger on many such cases? What truer account can be given of many a young man, and many a young woman, that they seem possessed of devils? It is vain to shut our eyes to facts. Demonical possession of men's bodies may be comparatively rare. But many, unhappily, are the cases in which the devil appears completely to possess men's souls. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p. 267



William Barclay

Keep learning – or lose what you had!

### 8:31-34 Another problem for humanist critics, who see pain as incompatible with the Christian view of God

[10] [8:30-33] *The Cure.* – To this prayer, in which the victim became involuntarily the advocate of his tormentor, Jesus replies by putting a question: He asks the afflicted man his name. For what purpose? There is nothing so suitable as a calm and simple question to bring a madman to himself. Above all, there is no more natural way of awakening in a man who is beside himself the consciousness of his own personality, than to make him tell his own name. A man's name becomes the expression of his character, and a summary of the history of his life. Now, the first condition for any cure of this afflicted man was a return to the distinct feeling of his own personality. There was at this time a word which, more than any other, called up the idea of the resistless might of the conqueror under whom Israel was then

## Vested interest in pigs! The Gadarenes are not yet extinct

[15] [8:19-39] Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell this story. There has been difficulty about it. I am inclined to think the difficulty was first raised by Huxley. He and Gladstone had a long controversy on the difficulty of this story. ... It has been said that Christ had no right to destroy property. It may be well to say here that there are only two occasions in the ministry of our Lord when any act of His power was along the line of destruction. One was the withering of the fig tree, and the other was this of the swine. ... These people were living on Jewish territory. They belonged to the Jewish

nation. They had no right to have pigs. He was there as Jewish Messiah, and when He permitted the demons to enter the pigs, He swept out a forbidden traffic. The people who had vested interest in pigs, were just as mad with Him as some people are with most of you decent folk who believe in prohibition! It is the same thing! Touch vested interests; interfere there, and they tell you you are kill-joys. The moral issue is not considered. They are simply in succession to these pig-dealers. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.113

suffering oppression. This was the word Legion. The sound of this word called up the thought of those victorious armies before which the whole world bowed down. So it is by this term that this afflicted man describes the power which oppresses him, and with which he still confounds himself. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.245

**[11]** [8:31-33] It is also to be remembered that Jesus neither sent the demons into the pigs (He did no more than give them permission), nor the pigs into the lake (the narrative does not say that He willed the destruction of the pigs). **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 156

**[12]** [8:33] The extraordinary malice, hatred of God's creation, and love of mischief, which are attributes of Satan, appear strikingly in this fact. Satan must be doing harm. If he cannot harm man, he will harm swine. Well would it be for the world, if Christians were as unwearied and zealous in doing good. as devils are in doing evil. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p. 272

### **8:35-40 What is the appropriate, preferably permanent place of the disciple? (10:38-42)**

**[13]** [8:37] It has been remarked by many commentators, that these Gadarenes are an exact type of the men of this world. They saw the miraculous deliverance of a fellow creature from Satan's power, and took no interest in it. But they saw the loss of their swine with deep concern. In a word, they cared more for the loss of swine, than the saving of a soul. There are thousands like them. Tell them of the success of missionaries, and the conversion of souls at home or abroad, they hear it with indifference, if not with a sneer. But if you tell them of the loss of property, or a change in the value of money, they are all anxiety and excitement. Truly the generation of the Gadarenes is not yet extinct! **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p. 278

**[14]** [8:38,39] Because the region was so secluded from the Jewish masses in Galilee, and since there existed no danger from inflamed Messianic passions, Jesus commanded him to make known what had been done to him. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p. 257