

KEY THOUGHTS

- As a reminder, our soul is that non-physical part of who we are, including our emotions, intellect, and will. It also includes our spirit, that part of us which allows us to relate to God. It is that part, our spirit, which we deal with in Cultivate.
- The parable of the soils, Matthew 13:1-23, gives us insight into how to care for our souls.
- Verses 1-9 give us the telling of the parable; v.10-17 tell us why Jesus chose to speak in parables, and v.18-23 gives us Jesus explaining the meaning.
- What determined the fruitfulness was not the seed (the word of God according to Luke 8:11), nor the way the seed was spread (presentation of the message), nor the one spreading it (the messenger). What determined the fruitfulness was the quality of the soil, or the condition of the heart.

SYMPTOMS OF A HARDENED SOUL

The hardened soil, soul, heart is mentioned over 40 times in Scripture. Here are some symptoms of a hard soul:

- Nothing gets through – How frequently am I stirred, challenged, encouraged, moved, gripped, or convicted by the message from God and His word?
- Nothing changes – How specifically have I changed and matured in my faith in the past year?
- Insensitivity toward sin – Are there things in my life that I once thought were wrong or sinful but which I no longer have the force of that conviction?
- Disobedience to God's commands – If I am regularly disobedient to the Lord, the only way my mind and spirit can live with that is to harden my heart to its "wrongness".

SCRIPTURES

- Matthew 13:1-23

PRACTICAL & REFLECT

If I find in myself a hardened heart or soul, two strategic actions to take:

1. Take specific actions to violently break patterns, loyalties, and defenses.

- I don't need a little alteration. I need an upheaval. That's how you break up hardened ground.
- Patterns: behaviors turn into habits, and habits shape our souls. Make significant steps in changing patterns in your life.
- Loyalties: where my committed affections lie. Some significant altering or breaking of unhealthy loyalties may be needed.
- Defenses: previous hurts or things for which I blame the Lord. While it feels risky, those defenses will need to be taken down to allow the Lord to bring healing and a healthy soul.

2. Pray for God's shovel.

- The soil really can't "unharden" itself. God must step in. To pray for God to break up a hardened heart can be a violent task. Remember, God blinded Saul for a short season to break up his patterns and loyalties. Do you trust the Lord enough to ask Him to use His shovel to break up your hardened soil?