

I preached in many places as I traveled throughout the land and I talked to a large number of people about the good news of the Christ and His tremendous loving sacrifice. Many received the word and let it live and grow in their hearts. But there was always a few that did not listen and did not respond.

One particular person that I worked with while helping to building houses in a small village was such a person. Not only did I tell him the story of the man who built his house on the sand¹, as told by the Son of God, but I offered other advice from my years of experience. But he put up an absolute barrier to anything I spoke to him.

I remember the parable that the Teacher told many times about the sower and the seed². Certain parts of that stood out to me as I considered how to deal with my colleague:

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Jesus spoke in parables, saying “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ... For this people’s heart has become calloused ... ³” When He referred to the rocky soil, He stated that when trouble or persecution comes, they quickly fall away⁴.”

But He blessed those who did hear and understand, and stated that righteous people longed to take advantage of what they were being told. And they became extremely productive because of it⁵.

In the parable, He spoke of the seed falling on rocky ground as referring to someone who heard the word and at once received it with joy⁶. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. The prediction of receiving the word with “joy” was certainly not the case with my acquaintance.

In thinking about the parable, I gained some comfort in giving him the nickname “Rocky”⁷, because his mind was so closed that no seed cast there survived. Of course, I never called him that to his face... That would have been the only thing that I said that he would plant and grow!

1. Matthew 7:24-29.
2. Matthew 13:1-23.
3. Matthew 13:15.
4. Matthew 13:21.
5. Matthew 13:8 & 23.
6. Matthew 13:20.
7. This story reflects an adversarial relationship I had at work with someone who never listened, even though I had decades more work experience. I felt the nickname “Rocky” was appropriate in this story, as it is used twice in each of the synoptic gospels in the parable of the soils (NIV), so it seemed legitimate to call someone that who doesn’t listen (or does not let your ideas sink in to any depth). I note that Jesus gave Simon son of John the alternate name Peter (“Rock”) but for entirely different reasons.

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