

At first the treasure of the truth is received with joy. People are as impressed with it as Simon Magus was.² But it is not the love of truth that makes them so glad as much as the desire to use it, for instance to gain prestige and fame through the truth. When the opposite occurs then it soon becomes apparent that the treasure is not really appreciated.

"Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." *Mark* 4:18, 19.

When the vessel is already full, there is no room for the treasure. The weeds and thorns prevent the true treasure from taking root. Therefore the vessel must first be emptied. We can give the cares of this world to the Saviour, and we should give up the deception of riches by giving our means for the support of God's work. The desire for pleasure, that damages the vessel, must be uprooted. Even when we receive the treasure of truth with a pure heart we still need to take care that bad seeds, which would corrupt the treasure, do not find their way in again.

Since we are vessels for the holy truth, and our bodies are a temple for the Holy Spirit, we will take good care of this temple if we really appreciate the treasure. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." *1 Corinthians* 6:19, 20. This includes adopting a healthy lifestyle in regard to diet, dress, and many other things. Basically, gospel order is an appreciation of the treasure that God has given.

Caring for the Vessel

As a Man, our Saviour also gave an example of caring for the vessel. Not only was His speech pure, but His clothing, His body, and everything that He was responsible for were also pure. This was so characteristic of Him that His disciples even recognized Him by it.

On the resurrection morning, before the disciples knew what had happened to the body of their Lord, they did not remember His words concerning His resurrection, and therefore they supposed that thieves had stolen His body. But John realized that Jesus had risen because of a certain feature. It was only a minor thing, but it was a sign that

² See *Acts* 8:4–24.

Jesus honored the vessel for the sake of the treasure. His graveclothes had not been carelessly thrown into a corner but had been neatly folded together.

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.' Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed." *John* 20:1–8.

"The disciples hurried to the tomb, and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John 'saw, and believed.' He did not yet understand the scripture that Christ must rise from the dead; but he now remembered the Saviour's words foretelling His resurrection.

"It was Christ Himself who had placed those graveclothes with such care. When the mighty angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another, who with his company had been keeping guard over the Lord's body. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb, and unbound the wrappings from the body of Jesus. But it was the Saviour's hand that folded each, and laid it in its place. In His sight who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant. Order and perfection are seen in all His work." *The Desire of Ages*, 789.2, 3.

In all the examples of the seed that we have looked at, it is apparent that the problems lay neither with the seed nor with the sower. Instead, the problem lay in the vessel—the ground—into which the treasure was intended to enter. We have no influence over the sower, whom God alone chooses. Neither do we have any influence over the truth that is preached. This too is solely God's responsibility. But we do have an influence on the ground that the seed falls onto. It is true that we cannot change ourselves, but we can be willing to be changed. That is our decision.