

Lesson 3 – The Thorny Soil

- I. **Matthew 13:7 (NASB) "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out.**
 1. We now come to our third soil. We see an interesting thing with this third soil. We see thorns come up around this plant.
 - i. **Thorns** - thorns have meaning in scripture. Thorns are a picture of sin and of the curse.
 1. **Genesis 3:17-18 (NASB)** 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;
 - ii. When we see in this passage then that “the thorns came up and choked them out.” We can discern that this is a picture of a believer who has become ensnared in the thorns of sin and that sin is now choking out their growth and their ability to be fruitful.
 - iii. Jesus says as much when He enlightens us to it’s meaning later in this passage:
 1. **Matthew 13:22 (NASB) "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**
 - iv. I made mention earlier that this is a picture of a believer. Let’s look at the passage again to discern how this could be the interpretation.
- II. **Evidences that this is a Believer:**
 1. The Seed wasn’t taken away and life happened.
 2. **Thorns** - Thorns do their damage in two ways, what they do to a plant above the surface as well as below. We will discuss the below the surface issues shortly, but for now let’s focus on the surface. If a plant is getting choked out on the surface, this would indicate that the seed was germinated and produced a plant which would indicate that Life has happened.
 3. **Unfruitful** - Jesus mentions that this plant “becomes” unfruitful. Insinuating that it was or had been fruitful. We never see in scripture where an unbeliever EVER has the ability to be fruitful. The only way that an individual can be fruitful is for the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit. Only Believers have the Holy Spirit.
 - i. **A note on Thorns (sin)**
 1. In studying for this I read that when you are gardening it’s important that you get thorns out of your garden not only because the thorns damage the plants above the surface but thorns need the nutrients and elements from the soil to exist. Therefore thorns steal some of the essential elements that the plant needs to grow.
 2. Sin does the same thing to our hearts. Instead of spending time nurturing the Word or better said, our relationship with Him, the thorns or sin we have in our

lives steal vital energy and attention from us that ought to be devoted to Him. Instead we use it to keep feeding the sin in our lives that we need to let die.

ii. Additional Truth about the Sower

1. Notice something about these soils. Notice that Jesus gives us the quality of the soil before He sows there. One soil is rocky another already has thorns present. There's an important truth for us.
2. We must be careful when judging the quality of another person's walk or fruit. We can never really be too sure what they had been dealing with or going through when He saved them. We have no idea of the heart issues that they may have and may be continuing to deal with.
3. Also, remember that Jesus called this the parable of the Sower, not the parable of the Soils. This parable is more about Him than it is about you and I. Some day He is going to hold up those individuals He saved that had rocks and thorns in their lives. He's going to be able to hold them up and it will be a testament to His grace and mercy for whom He's saved.
 - a. **Ephesians 2:4-5,7 (NASB)** 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

iii. A Final Truth before Continuing

1. Just because a person is going through a season of shallowness or their caught up in sin doesn't mean that they can't become the Good Soil or that they weren't the good soil at some point in their life. As long as you have breath in your lungs you can become or return to being the good soil. The first step:
 - a. **1 John 1:9 (NASB)** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
2. Going back to our passage here with this thorny soil, let's review what happens to them again: **(Verse 22) and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

III. Worry and Wealth = Wilting

1. **Worry** - merimna (me'-rēm-nä) care, anxiety - anxiety about things pertaining to this earthly life (*"worry of the world"*).
 - i. **merizo** = to divide or draw different directions
 - ii. This is not to be confused with people that are born with an anxiety disorder or because of trauma in their life. This is a word pertaining to the idea of anxiety that comes from too much focus on the worries of this world. **Matthew 13:22 (NLT)**...but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life...

iii. **Simple definition of anxiety** – The feeling of anxiety arises in us when we try to control things outside of our control.

1. **The world will give us no shortage of things to worry about.**

a. **Luke 12:24-29 (NASB95)** 24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25 “And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?” 26 “If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? 27 “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 28 “But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith! 29 “And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

iv. Here’s what is so damaging about this kind of worrying: It’s what it does to my heart

1. **Luke 21:34 (NASB)** "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

2. **Weighted down** - burden one’s heart (NLT says “dulls one’s heart”)

a. Why does it burden or dull my heart? Because worry and anxiety, by their nature, come from misplaced trust. I worry because I’m trusting in my plan to handle a situation more than I’m trusting in His plan to handle a situation. This places an unnecessary burden on me.
b. Jesus said “My yolk is easy and my burden is light”
c. Why?
d. Because the worries of this life aren’t intended to be your worries...He wants you to give them to Him!

i. **1 Peter 5:7 (NASB)** casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

3. Jesus mentions this to Martha because Martha struggled with this in her life:

a. **Luke 10:40-42 (NASB)** 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

4. Jesus calls this type of worry sin...or thorns that choke out our ability to be fruitful.
 5. After talking about “The worry of the world” Jesus also adds: **the deceitfulness of wealth** –
 - a. **Wealth** - ploutos (plü'-tos) - abundance of external possessions (personal note, I believe this word can also be closely affiliated with “status” or the allure of chasing “status”)
 6. This is an especially important one for Believers in America to hear. We have so much. We are the definition of “abundance of external possessions.”
2. Here are 21 surprising statistics about our clutter that help us understand how big of a problem our accumulation has actually become.
1. There are 300,000 items in the average American home (LA Times).
 2. The average size of the American home has nearly tripled in size over the past 50 years (NPR).
 3. And still, 1 out of every 10 Americans rent offsite storage—the fastest growing segment of the commercial real estate industry over the past four decades. (New York Times Magazine).
 4. British research found that the average 10-year-old owns 238 toys but plays with just 12 daily (The Telegraph).
 5. 3.1% of the world’s children live in America, but they own 40% of the toys consumed globally (UCLA).
 6. The average American woman owns 30 outfits—one for every day of the month. In 1930, that figure was nine (Forbes).
 7. Americans spend more on shoes, jewelry, and watches (\$100 billion) than on higher education (Psychology Today).
 8. Women will spend more than eight years of their lives shopping (The Daily Mail).
 9. Over the course of our lifetime, we will spend a total of 3,680 hours or 153 days searching for misplaced items. The research found we lose up to nine items every day—or 198,743 in a lifetime. Phones, keys, sunglasses, and paperwork top the list (The Daily Mail).
 10. Americans spend \$1.2 trillion annually on nonessential goods—in other words, items they do not need (The Wall Street Journal).
 11. The \$8 billion home organization industry has more than doubled in size since the early 2000’s—growing at a staggering rate of 10% each year (Uppercase).
3. The numbers paint a jarring picture of excessive consumption and unnecessary accumulation. Fortunately, the solution is not difficult. The invitation to own less is an invitation to freedom, intentionality, and passion. And it can be discovered at your nearest drop-off center.
- <https://www.becomingminimalist.com/clutter-stats/>
- i. While I appreciate the author’s sentiment that our freedom will come by simply dropping off our excess things at the nearest drop-off center that’s really not accurate.
 - ii. The abundance of things that we own is simply the result of our hearts treasuring the wrong things and going and dropping those items at the Goodwill is not going to solve the heart problem that is causing the focus on material possessions.

1. **Luke 12:33-34 (NASB)** 33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
4. Jesus is letting us know that real possessions are not the temporary possessions here. Real possessions are those things that are going ahead of us. They are those things that the Holy Spirit does through us that are eternal. This is what we call **fruit**.
5. It is also why He has this to say again about this 3rd Soil:
 - i. **22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**
6. Notice again what Jesus says happens to individuals who become overly caught up in the world: they become **unfruitful**.
7. This is an important statement.
8. Jesus is quite literally telling us that if we allow ourselves we can become so taken by this world and what this world has to offer that it will rob us of the eternal possessions we are hoping we have stored up for us in heaven.
 - i. **Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB)** 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
9. Why can't you produce fruit when you are choosing to walk a sinful path? Because you can't walk in the Spirit when you are walking in the flesh!!
 - i. **Galatians 5:17 (NASB95)** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

IV. Where does Fruit Come From

1. Something else I believe to be very important in this passage as it relates to this message is what Jesus actually says becomes unfruitful. Jesus doesn't say that you become unfruitful,
 - i. He says: and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and **IT** becomes unfruitful.
 - ii. Jesus says that it's the Word that's implanted inside of you that becomes unfruitful. There is some tremendous meaning here then for us.
 - iii. It is the Word inside of you that is changing you and producing a strong root. How do I know that it's that Word that is causing the change in you:
 1. **Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- iv. This is one of my favorite passages to describe what God's Word is. Notice it says that it's "living and active."
- v. Remember what Jesus called it in this passage, it's the Seed in this passage. In the interaction with the Woman at the Well He called it Living Water. Notice in our passage here in Hebrews it again is referred to as LIVING.
 - 1. **Living** - zaō (zä'-ō) -to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead.
 - a. living water, having vital power in itself and exerting the same upon the soul
- vi. We are also told that it is active:
 - 1. **Active** - energēs (en-er-gā's) - This quite literally means that God's word puts off an energy that is powerful and effective. Just like any living thing produces and gives off energy God's Word is no different.
- vii. God had this to say about His Word:
 - 1. **Isaiah 55:10-11 (NASB)** 10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.
- viii. Here again, is you and I's reality, we have a new Life that has begun in us when we become believers, that new Life, that thing, that seed that is inside of us needs to be nourished. If we don't get the thorns and rocks out of the soil of our hearts, if we don't gain some depth in that soil of our hearts then we will cut off the nourishment that the seed needs to grow and produce fruit in us.
- ix. Jesus is telling us here we have two choices, we have the choice to focus on Earthly things or Eternal things. When we focus on Earthly things (Worry and Wealth) the thorns from that focus choke out what His Word is trying to do inside of us.

V. DEMAS

- 1. Demas was a man that traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys. Paul thought enough of Demas that he mentions him on more than one occasion:
 - i. **Colossians 4:14 (NASB)** Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.
 - ii. **Philemon 1:24 (NASB)** as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.
- 2. But something happened to Demas along the way:
 - i. **2 Timothy 4:9-10 (NASB)** 9 Make every effort to come to me soon; 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...

1. *“The Greek verb used in the original implies that Demas had not merely left Paul but had left him “in the lurch”; that is, Demas had abandoned Paul in a time of need. The apostle was in prison, facing a death sentence, and that’s when Demas chose to set sail. Undoubtedly, Paul was deeply let down by Demas. It’s never easy to see a friend and associate in whom you’ve placed your trust forsake you in the midst of hardship. The separation caused by Demas’ desertion of Paul was not merely spatial but spiritual. Demas left Rome because he fell in love with the world.”*

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Demas-in-the-Bible.html>

3. **22" And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**
 - i. Satan uses the things of the world to distract. The things we can see, temporary things but we are told to look at things that are much more legitimate:
 1. **2 Corinthians 4:18 (NASB)** 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
 - ii. Said another way:
 1. **2 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB)** for we walk by faith, not by sight—
 - iii. How do we walk by faith? By keeping our eyes focused:
 1. **Hebrews 12:1-2 (NASB)** 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us (THORNS), and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
4. In order to fix our eyes on Christ we must be rooted in His Word and we must get rid of the sin in our lives.

