

# THORNY GROUND – PART I

Peter Hay, prepared for Sunday Bible study, 26 July 2020  
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## Introduction

Today we are going to continue in our series on the parable of the sower and the seed, and will be looking particularly at the grounds that Jesus spoke of in this parable.

In the course of Christ's narrative, we are up to thorny ground this week.

As I was preparing on the thorny ground, I reached page seven in my notes and realised that there was going to be far too much content to cover in one session. In fellowship, we have decided to split this session into two.

This session will be about the same length as we have normally done, and the next session will be shorter. We felt that the content is important, and it will be fresh for many of us.

Instead of trying to rush all the content at once, we are going to take our time with it. We will cover this particular ground, the thorny ground, over two weeks.

## The nature of thorny ground

To begin our consideration of thorny ground, let us start with Jesus' explanation of this ground. We will look at each of the gospel accounts of the thorny ground.

Jesus said, 'Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.' Mat 13:22.

The account in the Gospel of Mark reads, '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.' Mar 4:18-19.

The final account is in the Gospel of Luke: 'Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.' Luk 8:14.

Jesus explained that in a heart that is like thorny ground, remembering that the thorny ground itself speaks about an individual's heart, it does not refer

to something that is external to us. This is the seed fallen into *our heart*, which is like thorny ground.

## Thorny weeds grow up instead of fruitfulness

He said that, in that ground, something grows up within a person that competes with the new creation life of which they have been born.

So, *something* is growing up in the ground, but it is a thorny 'weed'.

In addition, it is competing with the new creation life that has been brought forth by the seed planted into our heart, through the incorruptible seed by the living and abiding word of God.

Our sonship becomes choked, and we become *unfruitful* - that is a key element throughout Jesus' explanation.

What does it mean for this competition to be occurring, leading to unfruitfulness?

It means that *living as a son of God*, by *offering* in the *fellowship* of the body of Christ, is no longer the priority and focus of a person's life.

Jesus made the point that no-one can serve two masters. Mat 6:24. He said that we either hate the one and love the other, or we will be loyal to one and despise the other.

Really, this is a helpful understanding of the dynamic that is happening within a thorny ground heart. There is a competing agenda, and it is competing for the attention and the life of a person, and the direction to which they are giving that effort.

## The main indication of thorny ground

Now, what is the main indication of thorny ground?

The main indication of a thorny ground identity is a 'prickly', or thorny, demeanour towards others.

So, it is not so much that we are enduring the prickles of others; thorny ground explains the nature of *our own* heart and expression.

## The thorny ground demeanour

This demeanour may include our *sharp and agitated reactions* towards others when we don't get our own way.

It may be our *provocation* of one another, where we might be teasing or agitating another to get a response from them or to cajole them to see our point of view.

It includes our pointed *judgements* of others, particularly of the messengers and their message.

Thorny responses include cynicism and reservations regarding the culture of the body of Christ.

What is the culture of the body of Christ? It is *offering*, isn't it? It is *the expression of love*.

So, thorny responses are particularly cynicism and reservations around *offering*. Remember that these are two competing agendas.

The prickly demeanour is demonstrated through *strong opinions* that we can have about things for which we have absolutely *no accountability*.

So, with thorny ground, there is an element of *presumption*, isn't there?

### **Thorny ground is our expression toward others**

Now, it is important to note that thorny ground is not the thorns that are piercing us -I think I have made this point clear.

We are talking about *the expression of our own life toward others*.

This is the thorny heart. If we don't give attention to that which grows up within us, those agendas will choke away the expression of our sonship, which is all of the fruits of the Spirit.

And we will bring forth different 'fruit', which has a different impact on others.

### **Four types of thorny weeds**

When we put together those three explanations that Jesus gave, recounted through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we see that Jesus nominated four types of thorny weeds.

This is a fresh thought to me. Previously, I had bundled them all together as the thorns. However, Jesus was actually quite specific about the different types of weeds, or *thorny realities*, that grow up in us and *choke the sonship life* that we have received in the seed of the word.

These four types of weeds are: the cares of this world; the deceitfulness of riches; the desires for other things; and the pleasures of life.

Now, of course, they are all connected, but we can identify through the Scriptures these specific types of weed and the ways in which they affect our lives; and particularly how they affect the fruit that we bear in our lives.

We could do a complete session on each of these types of weeds. So, today, we will address each of these types of weeds to introduce them. This will give us scope for further conversation in our houses together.

### **Weeds planted by the wicked one when we are relationally and devotionally lazy**

Before we examine these weeds, we make the point that the weeds are *planted by the wicked one*.

As we will consider next week, or in our next session, they are planted when we are 'asleep' in relation to the *stewardship* of our lives and of our families and households.

Did you hear that point?

The weeds take root in our lives and in our households because of *relational and devotional laziness*.

### **Inattention and disobedience to the word of present truth**

It may be because of presumption, but it is certainly connected to *inattention to the word of present truth*.

It is worth noting, and we will develop this point further next week, that the most lazy in relation to *first love* are usually the people who are most driven in relation to pursuing the riches of this world, or mammon.

'Laziness' does not mean merely lying in bed all day. Laziness has to do with giving our *attention* and effort to our *obedience*.

The only obedience that we have, and we are to give, is to God the Father, who is the source of the word of our life.

We can see that if we are not giving our attention to what the Father has defined for us, we are lazy in relation to *all righteousness*.

Let us begin to examine these weeds.

### **I. THE CARES OF THIS WORLD**

The first weed that Jesus identified is 'the cares of this world'.

When I was previously thinking about the cares of this world, I wasn't quite sure what that meant. I suspected that the cares of this world are that we become *invested* in the things that people in the world care about, and that might include some of the 'causes' that are important to people in the world.

Actually, that is not what the cares of the world mean at all.

### **The cares of the world - the impact of the Fall in our marriages**

In fact, the cares of the world particularly relate to *the impact of the Fall in our marriages*.

As you will see, Paul spoke point blank on this understanding.

He said, 'But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord - how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world - how he may please his wife.' 1Co 7:32-33.

Now, isn't that amazing! We have just read that the one who receives seed among the thorns is the one who *hears the word*, and the cares of this world *choke* it.

Paul, in this passage, said that the one who cares about the things of this world is focused on how he may 'please his wife'.

We need to understand this, because that is actually where the thorn is being expressed, and it has an effect in our marriages.

'There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world - how she may please her husband.

'And this I say for your *profit*, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord *without distraction*.' 1Co 7:34-35.

What an amazing passage of Scripture that is in relation to understanding thorny ground!

Of course, Paul was not saying that marriage is bad or that we shouldn't get married. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to bring children to birth, and there would be no 'blessing of Abraham' in every family, would there?

### **For the profit of firstfruits**

No, Paul was not saying that. What Paul was saying about marriage and our 'attention' is revealed in relation to verse thirty-five.

He said, 'I am saying this *for your own profit*.' 1Co 7:35.

Remember that thorny ground has to do with two types of 'profit', doesn't it?

One profit has to do with what is *obtained through the spirit of the world*.

The other profit is *bringing forth firstfruits*; the fruit of the Seed of which we have been born.

He was saying, then, 'I am saying this to you so that you *bring forth good fruit*.'

### **Serving the Lord without the distraction of the cares of this world**

'This I say for your own profit, not that I may place a leash on you.' 1Co 7:35.

He meant, 'I'm not putting a leash on you to stop you from getting married. I am saying this for your *profit*, not that I might stop you from getting married, but for what is proper; what is foundational; what is true in relation to our marriages.'

For what reason? So that, in our households, we may serve the Lord *without the distraction of the cares of this world*.

Paul was not saying that marriage is bad or that it is better that we don't get married.

Rather, he was drawing attention to *the fruitless culture in marriages* that are not reformed in the cross of Christ.

These marriages operate by the principles of the world that were established in the fall of Adam and Eve.

### **Marriage based on the other law**

So, to understand what the cares of this world are, and what it means to give our attention to please our husband or to please our wife, we need to see how that operated in the marriage of Adam and Eve, associated with the Fall.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their *desire* to have the life, which they believed they could obtain by eating this fruit, became the basis of their life.

When it became part of their identity, their identity was 'the sight of their eyes'.

This desire, which was called 'another law', affected the way in which they perceived life.

It affected the way in which they perceived themselves; it affected the way that they perceived one another, and it affected their expectations of one another. These expectations came from the basis of their perceptions of good and evil.

### **The man who turns his face away from the face of Christ, to the cares of the world**

A man who is married and cares about the things of the world has *turned his face from the headship of Christ*.

Paul was not saying that an unmarried man doesn't have cares of the world.

He was saying that when a *marriage is based* on this fallen principle, a man turns his face from Christ as the *source* of the word for his life.

And he *receives* it from a different source, just as Adam turned his face from Christ and received fruit from his wife.

A man who is married and cares about the things of this world has turned his face from the headship of Christ, which is *expressed by the word from Christ through the presbytery*.

The man with his head 'uncovered' is able to *receive* the word as the direction for his life, and for the life of his family, from the presbytery from whom the word is being proclaimed. That is where he receives his *wisdom and understanding* for the culture of his household.

When he does not receive it from the word from the presbytery, he is receiving it from his wife; or he is drawing the expression of his life from interfacing with the face of his wife.

In the first instance, he endeavours to fulfil the commitment that he made to his wife when he went 'down on his knee' and promised to uphold and serve the romantic culture that she aspires to cultivate *in her own image*. The *direction* for his life and the family comes from his wife, rather than the Lord.

If you are one who went down on your knee and held the ring up and promised to serve your wife's agenda, to care for her and to support her, and to be her 'champion' - that is a fallen culture.

That person committed himself to live in a way *that pleases his wife*.

That is not what a Christian man should be offering to a young lady.

If that has been the foundation of a marriage, it needs to be reformed in the image to which God has called us to be established as husband and wife.

*Repentance* is needed here.

Remember that it was Eve who was *deceived* by the serpent, and Eve took the fruit which she had already eaten and gave the fruit to Adam. It actually wasn't the devil who gave the fruit to Adam; it was the woman.

So, Adam turned his face from Christ, who is the source of the word and life for him and his family, and he received the 'agenda' that his wife was giving to him.

### **How a man may please his wife's 'agenda'**

When he did that, his focus was not on the things of the Lord; on how he may please the Lord. Now his focus was on his wife and how he may please his wife. 1Co 7:33.

Why does this become a thorny response? How does this end up being the cares of this world, which are thorns?

His focus is on how to serve his wife and to keep her 'happy'. That is what Paul said - how he may please his wife.

That will have two implications in terms of a thorny response.

On the one hand, he is capitulating to his wife, and he is saying, 'I'm just doing whatever she says, to keep the peace.' He resents it. There is a seething underneath but, for the sake of compliance and keeping the peace, he *acquiesces to that agenda*.

Or, he actually believes in the agenda, and he is very strong on his wife's behalf, over and against others who are questioning the agenda, or against the word itself that is bringing light, or a reflection, on the family culture, and is challenging that family culture. He becomes very strong on her behalf.

Do you see that that point of *judgement* and *reaction* is still a thorny response?

In the endeavour to please his wife, either through resentment or because he believes in the agenda, there is a reaction, or a strong motivation, or response, that is indicative of a thorn *in himself*. That is on the side of the one who has capitulated to that agenda and is loyal to it.

On the other hand, this is still part of the Fall and, as the agenda of his wife is expressed, he may seek to dominate this, to regain control and to drive the agenda of his household.

This is still a prickly, thorny response. His prickly demeanour is evident in his endeavour to 'rule over', or dominate, his wife.

### **The woman focused on the cares of the world**

What about the woman who is married, with a fallen marriage culture, and her desire is to 'please her husband'?

What does the prickle, or the thorny weed, look like in relation to her endeavouring to please her husband?

A woman who is married and cares about the things of this world is focused on cultivating a romantic, or ideal, family context *according to her own perspective*.

She is trying to cultivate or to bring to birth, something that is *in her own image* - this is her desire for 'God-likeness', isn't it?

Motivated by the other law within her, the woman imposes this desire upon her husband and family as being the best thing for him and the family.

It is coming from her, not from the head of her house through *offering*. She has an agenda.

This is illustrative of Eve 'feeding' Adam and the family with the food that is *sourced* from her, all with the good intention of creating a lovely, ideal, fruitful, family context.

How does she do this? What does her thorn 'look like'?

Well, it will come across as the 'badgering' of her husband, to try to cajole him and the children to this culture, which is, in her view, 'in their best interest'.

She will point out his faults to try to get him to see her point of view, and to join her agenda.

This is 'thorny', isn't it? Badgering, pointing out his faults is a thorny response.

It is the *driving* of the agenda in order to get her own way.

It also might be that she, as part of her view on what the culture of her household should be, wants her husband to be a strong, angelic, 'cherub-like' figure.

She wants him to be 'strong' in the face of contrary circumstances or to appear to have authority and stature within the community - particularly in the church community.

What does she do, as part of this, that is a thorny response?

On her own behalf, she goes around and manages, outside of the family, people's responses to her husband; she 'has her husband's back'. She fights, challenging those who are at odds with what her husband is saying, affirming his agenda on her behalf.

Do you see that this drive has *nothing* to do with offering? It has everything to do with pleasing her husband as she sees best.

### **The clash of the pursuit of God-likeness and the pursuit of dominion**

This is a fallen marriage culture, and it brings forth only thorns in each individual, resulting in enmity; the clash of these thorns with one another.

When Adam and Even ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in pursuit of their agendas, Eve partook of the fruit because of her pursuit of God-likeness and Adam pursued dominion over the creation. Adam sought wisdom and power.

However, the Lord said that they would not get what they wanted. He said that those agendas that became a desire within them would *clash*.

### **The curse as a consequence of disobedience to God's word**

God said that they would be 'cursed' as a consequence of their *disobedience to the word*.

The word was to have been the source of their life and, because they were disobedient to the word, this curse was the implication for them.

He said to the woman, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children.' Gen 3:16.

That is not only the pain of labour. Bringing forth children in pain is actually the children being a pain to her from their thorny responses to life.

That's interesting, isn't it? We will cover this topic next week regarding thorns within a household.

But the Lord said to the woman who has this desire in her heart, 'Your desire will be for your husband.' Gen 3:16. Her desire for her agenda will cause her to badger him, to point out his faults. She will drive her agenda so that he fits within her romantic view.

But the Lord said, 'As you do that, your husband shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16.

Do you see the clash that results when this is the agenda, or the basis, for marriage outside the image of God?

To the man, He said, 'Cursed is the ground for your sake.' Gen 3:17.

The 'ground' is both his heart and the context of his 'work', and his primary work is the family.

'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.' Gen 3:17-18.

Obviously, there is a great deal that we can say about this principle, and we have written about it in *The Steps of Salvation* Part 7, which we will continue to study as part of the Bible School.

### **Marriages needing reformation**

The point that I want to make today is not, firstly, regarding the details of the implications of this marriage condition.

Rather, it is to say that where marriages are *not being reformed* through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, there will be *enmity* in the house.

Remember that this is the word of the cross defining the culture of our marriages. Moreover, we can see how important it is that we understand the principle of Jezebel and the need for reformation in our marriages.

*Enmity* is the effect, or the pain, associated with thorns.

Where there is no relief from that enmity, the actual life and blessing that we are supposed to obtain is actually lost - it is choked; it is gone.

The culture of a house may have the appearance of composure, but bitterness and disconnection between husband and wife will stifle their true meeting, and that household will be bereft of grace.

### **The word of the cross dealing with a thorny heart**

To reiterate the point, it is very easy to point out the thorny responses of others towards us, and to presume that their 'thorniness' is the curse upon us.

However, the thorniness is in *our heart*; it is *our response* to this circumstance.

I love the way that Peter addresses this principle, saying that, irrespective of the nature of a marriage culture, as each individual meets Christ and receives the word of the cross, they can be *delivered* from their own thorny responses, and can be *a minister of grace to the other*.

### **Receiving wisdom to serve 'without distraction'**

The apostle Peter said, in his first letter, 'Wives ...'

Remember that a wife can either be taken with the cares of this world, seeking to please her husband from the basis of the flesh; or she can be *delivered* from that propensity for 'profit', allowing true riches to be revealed.

This is the life of God and the grace of life, and being able to serve the Lord 'without distraction'.

'Wives, likewise [What is the answer? Is it badgering? Pointing out faults? Bringing up his mistakes? No.], *be submissive to your own husbands*, that even if some *do not obey the word* [This is not a person who has been born of the seed with thorns in his heart; this is a person who doesn't even have the seed in his heart!], they [the husband], without a word [*without* his wife's expression of some means of arriving at an agenda or driving the agenda; cajoling], may be won by the conduct of their wives.' 1Pe 3:1.

'The husband, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct.'

The word 'chaste' means 'pure', and it is exactly the same word as the 'pure wisdom' from above.

Do you see that this is a woman who is letting go of her own word, and is receiving the word, or the *wisdom*, from above?

That is 'pure conduct'. That word 'conduct' is exactly the same word for 'conversation' – the way in which we speak and the way that we conduct ourselves, or walk.

### **'Accompanied by fear'**

The phrase 'accompanied by fear' does not refer to the fear of death which drives us to hold on to our agenda.

This refers to *the fear of God*. It is the fear that Christ Himself demonstrated when He prayed with godly fear to the One who could save His life.

We have to accept (and I'm sure that we can all testify to) the 'prickly' responses in our lives, and particularly in our marriages.

However, we can believe, as we are committed to the word of the cross, and seeing it established as the culture - our conversation and conduct - of our house, that we are being redeemed from this. The 'thorns' are actually being removed, and the blessing of life is becoming our possession. This is the 'true riches' that we are obtaining.

That's the first 'weed' – the cares of this world.

## **2. THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES**

Let's consider the second 'weed' – the deceitfulness of riches.

This weed has to do with what we *prioritise* in our life.

'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust *destroy* and where thieves break in and *steal*; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

'For where your *treasure* is, there your heart will be also.' Mat 6:19-21.

Clearly, the pursuit of worldly wealth will affect our sonship. We've already made the point that we can't serve two masters – we will either hate one and love the other or we will be loyal to one and despise the other.

But this thorn is not so much about the 'pursuit' of those things; it's the fact that *we are deceived* when we do it.

We often lean on the pursuit of wealth but, in fact, the *deceitfulness* of riches is the actual 'weed'.

## **Deception – believing that the desires of our heart are the truth**

Let's get to the heart of this point.

The apostle John said that if we say that we have no sin, we *deceive ourselves* and *the truth* is not in us. 1Jo 1:8.

If we say that we have no sin, we are *deceived*.

This means that the thorns of the deceitfulness of riches have become the defining principle of our life, causing the truth of our sonship to fall away.

Do you see that? That is amazing, isn't it?

John said, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.'

What did he mean by saying, 'We have no sin', because none of us, certainly those in the church, I would imagine, would say that we have no sin?

And, in fact, if we went into the world and asked, 'Do you have no sin?', very few people would say that they are without sin.

What, then, was John stating?

John was pointing out that we are deceived when we believe that the way that we view life, and the activities that we are engaged in that are motivated by the desires of our own heart, are spiritual, true and lead to life.

Do you see the point?

So, we say that we have no sin when we believe that the desires of our heart, which we are pursuing, are the truth.

Obviously, that's a deception, isn't it? But we see the point that pursuing the desires of our heart *is* sin, because *we* are the source of it and it is in complete *disobedience* to what the Father is saying to us.

But we say that what we are doing is actually the Christian life.

This is a very important point to understand.

### **Pursuing our own 'riches', not sonship and fellowship**

It's not merely that we pursue riches; it's that we are deceived into thinking that the 'riches' that we are pursuing is *the blessing of life*. That is a very dark place to be, isn't it?

A 'thorny ground' person does not believe that their sonship life is hindered or that fellowship in

the body of Christ is not their priority, all the while pursuing what they believe to be good or desirable for them.

'The desires of your heart' is another expression for 'the motivation of the flesh', which is 'another law' within me.

We pursue the other law and the activities that we view to be good, calling that 'the blessing of sonship and fellowship in the body of Christ'.

We can't see the distinction between the two. It's a deception.

### **Evidence of thorny ground**

But, what is the indication of that disparity?

It's that these ones 'bristle' and become 'prickly' when the activities that they prioritise, and the culture that they live, is not affirmed by others as being godly.

Some of their friends would say, 'It is odd that you would not prioritise the communion over your family function.'

When they hear that, they bristle and say, 'Well, surely family is important. This is our opportunity to share with them.'

Actually, they are forsaking 'the gathering together'.

Where is your treasure?

Can you see the point that it is deception?

And the *evidence* of this thorny deception in a person is that they bristle and are short in their responses to those who bring obvious clarity.

### **True riches is being joined to the fellowship of Yahweh**

They may even believe that their pursuit and apprehension of wealth - so, they actually receive what that they are pursuing; lots of possessions or wealth - is a happy life. And they say that the acquisition of those things is 'the blessing of God'.

I am not saying that God doesn't bless people; but I am saying that those things are *passing away*.

True blessing is not what you get *here* - the true blessing of God is that which is *eternal* and is yours forever.

Do you see the difference?

We need to be very clear on what the blessing of God is.

The blessing of God is *you* becoming the son whom He named you to be, and being joined to the fellowship of Yahweh Himself. This is true riches.

The activities in which a person or a family engage in the pursuit of riches are simply those things that you *value*. It's not necessarily that you want to have lots of money or many possessions.

It could be that you simply want lots of time, or various experiences or pursuits that you *value*. That is the riches of the world.

### **The pursuit of riches instead of offering in Christ**

Often, the activities in which a person or family engage in the pursuit of riches are in place of, or an alternative to, *offering*.

The pursuit of riches is the desire to *have life according to the good of our own perspective*, whereas offering is the *culture of laying our lives down for another*.

Do you see the clash here? The deceitfulness of riches is the desire to *have* life.

And you can actually try to have life through religious activities - that could be your 'riches'.

But offering is the complete opposite to that.

Offering is not actually about *obtaining* anything at all; offering is about laying something down.

And when you lay your life down, *you will find it*. That is where you receive life.

### **The riches of this world - self-defined works**

So, we need to be delivered from this deception.

The life that we desire to have in the flesh and presume to obtain through the accomplishments of our self-defined works are 'the riches of this world'.

This is because they are the riches that were promised to mankind by Satan, who is the ruler of this world. He said, 'If you achieve the desires of your heart, you will have life.'

Riches are not only about possessions. Riches are whatever you desire, believing that if you have your desires, you will have *life*.

These are the riches of this world, because the ruler of this world promised that to you. We see these riches as being a 'reward' that we pursue.

Riches can be a 'profile' or success in the workplace or community; but can also be a profile in the body of Christ.

### **The reward of eternal life - sonship**

Jesus made this point very clear in the book of Matthew. He said, 'When you pray [or do anything in the life of a fellowship; the most fundamental thing being praying], you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.'

If you receive your reward in full *now*, it means that the actual reward of *eternal life* is gone, doesn't it?

Something has choked and taken the place of new creation life.

'But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.' Mat 6:5-6.

What does He *reward* you with? He rewards you with your *sonship* – because what are you doing in the secret place? You are asking, seeking and knocking for the word of sonship.

That is the initiative of one who has been delivered from the bondage of fear that drives them to attain riches for life, and is fearing the Lord, having received a spirit of adoption, crying out, 'Abba! Father!' That is the answer.

### **The indication of deception in the pursuit of riches**

What is the indication that we are deceived in the pursuit of the riches of the world?

If this is deception, how can you possibly know that what you are pursuing is not true blessing?

Well, the most fundamental and most obvious expression of a person whose heart is thorny is our prickly responses to the word that calls us to make offering.

If the word is calling you to lay your life down, and that is jarring with you and you are saying that that word is not true; if you are making a pointed judgement or you are reactive to others who *are* laying their lives down, you need to give attention to the 'thorns' in your heart.

And you *can* turn. And if you *will* turn, those things are done away with.

### **3. THE DESIRE FOR OTHER THINGS**

Let's consider the third thorny weed – this is 'the desire for other things'.

We read, 'But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.' Jas 1:14.

So, temptation comes by another word. The word 'desire' in the Scriptures refers to the motivation of our own *other law* in our heart.

Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own view of good and evil, and when that happens, he is enticed.

#### **Enticed and drawn away**

'Then, when desire has conceived [something thorny has grown up], it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.' Jas 1:15.

What is this 'death'? It is the death of our sonship. So as one thorn grows up and chokes the life of our sonship, it dies away.

And then he said, '*Do not be deceived*, my beloved brethren.'

This is in reference to thorny ground; the way in which the desires for other things cause us to fall away.

#### **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above**

We've just talked about the deception of riches, haven't we? But he gives us the positive side to this; the answer to it.

'Don't you know, people?'

I can just see James; he seemed to have been an emphatic kind of man.

'Every good gift and every *perfect* gift is from above.' Jas 1:17.

'Perfect' – isn't that like His precious thoughts toward us that are more than the sand on the shore.

All of *our* views on what our life should be like is not perfection; that is *way below* what God has prepared for those who love Him. These views are from beneath, and what's from *beneath* is from Satan.

## **Understanding the operation of desire within us**

'And comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He *brought us forth* by the word of truth [the Seed that has fallen into the ground], that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creation.' Jas 1:17-18.

James was saying, in effect, 'Look to good ground but, to do that, you need to understand the operation of desire within you, and not be deceived by it.'

The desire for other things is what we *perceive* to be good for us, *outside* of the will of God for us in Christ Jesus.

Do you see that this is what James was saying?

This means, 'of His own will he brought us forth'.

The desires for things other than what the Father has defined for us are what we perceive to be good for us outside the will of God for us in Christ Jesus.

## **Tempted to another view regarding our pathway of sonship**

So, what happens? As we are walking in the path of life that Christ has pioneered for us, we begin to *doubt* whether the pathway of the cross that Christ has pioneered is leading to life - because it is a narrow and difficult way.

We begin to view the narrow and difficult way, not from a perspective that is from above, but from an earthly perspective.

So, we are *in the way*, and we *are walking on it*, but we begin to doubt whether the pathway of the cross leads to life.

Why do we do that?

It is because we are giving our eye and our ear to 'other' words - other expressions of what life could be like, which are beginning to tempt us.

## **Giving ourselves to pursuing life in another way**

You see, it's not God who is tempting us; rather, it is that we are *giving our attention to other things* that we may see in the media.

Some people are absolutely addicted to social media, such as Facebook, and they measure

themselves against all the 'lovely' pictures of everyone else's life.

All of a sudden, they think, 'Well, my life does not look like that.'

Or they may watch television or movies that define for them a culture or an ideal. All of a sudden, other words are feeding into what life should be like - what you *expect* for your life.

Such temptation, if we allow ourselves to be drawn away by it, provokes the desires of our other law, and we begin to deviate from the pathway of our sonship.

So, instead of walking in the way that has been pioneered for us, *another* desire takes the focus of our attention.

And it's not that we just follow after it; it's that we begin to love it and despise the way of the cross.

Again, we can't serve two masters, can we?

We let ourselves be tempted by what we 'give our ear and eye to'. We may give our ear to an alternative word from the spirit of the world, be it through the media, through worldly acquaintances, etc. The media may promote going to the beach every weekend; or doing 'this' every weekend; or our children are really successful because we've done 'this' or 'that'.

All of a sudden, we may think, 'Oh, my goodness, is that where life is? My life is not that pleasant.'

## **Desire for other things is covetousness**

We are tempted to believe the lie that we are 'missing out' on something; that life is somehow unfulfilled.

We become dissatisfied with life, and pursue what we think will give us *satisfaction*.

So, then, the desire for other things is actually about *the source of our satisfaction* in life.

It is actually a response of *covetousness*.

Now, God *does* want us to know satisfaction in this life. This is an important point.

The pathway of the cross is not just 'doom and gloom and pain and suffering'.

The pathway of the cross is *the pathway of life*.

Life is not 'a long way off'! Life is in every step, but it's life out of death.

What is the source of satisfaction for us, which God does want us to have? In fact, we're going to look at 'pleasure'. He wants you to know pleasure, but not the pleasure of *self-gratification*.

### **Our desires are an illusion**

Let's stick with 'desires for other things'.

God does want us to know satisfaction in life, but not according to the desires of our own heart.

He knows that these desires are an *illusion*.

They are not true; they do not lead to life; and they cause us to 'rage against all wise counsel'. Pro 18:1

Desire is an illusion that leads only to death.

And this desire that causes us to rage against all wise counsel is evidence of a person who is 'prickly' towards the word of God.

### **True satisfaction – the blessing of life in the fellowship of the body of Christ**

However, if we will turn again to the Lord and receive the wisdom which proceeds from His hand, which is pure, we will find *true satisfaction - the blessing of life in the fellowship of the body of Christ*.

We think that we need to know that we are satisfied and, when we are satisfied, we think that we can participate.

This means that if we feel comfortable or if we feel as though our life is a success, then we are happy to participate.

That is not true satisfaction – that is still the *gratification of our own flesh*.

### **Turning our face to the light**

How do we find true satisfaction in life? King David gave us some very helpful keys.

'As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness.' Psa 17:15.

The beginning point is to turn our face and to receive the light that is shining from the face of Christ.

That light is the light of *our righteous sonship*.

What is it shining from? It's shining from the face of our brethren. This is Christ in the face of our brethren.

So, we cannot forsake our gathering together with His people – that is the context of the body of Christ, which has a culture of *offering*.

The beginning point is to *turn* from the deception of our own sight to accept that that is not true riches.

Simply turn, looking into the face of your brethren in which you see the righteousness of your sonship.

### **Obtaining true satisfaction**

Then he said, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.' Psa 17:15.

When do you *awake in His likeness*?

It is when you are joined, or conformed, to His *death*, which is a type of sleeping. Death is a type of sleeping and, when you 'awake', you are coming up in *resurrection life* in the likeness of His sonship.

How beautiful is that! Your 'satisfaction' is found in *the reality of new life coming up out of death*. It doesn't precede that.

If you want to find full satisfaction, then turn your face to Christ, obtain the faith that is available in His word, and walk by the Spirit and in the fellowship of Christ's death.

You will awake in His likeness, and you will be satisfied. Praise the Lord, that is true satisfaction!

That is *a fruitful shoot* as all the other desires wilt away.

### **Delivered from thorns; giving oneself in offering**

I love the psalm where King David said, 'My praise shall be of You in the great assembly.' Psa 22:25.

Do you see that a thorny person is actually very hard to relate with? They don't really want to relate – they are 'prickly' people.

But, if you are being delivered from your thorns, you will desire to *sing praise*.

This is *the expression of a peace offering*. Your desire is for offering in the great assembly among the Lord's people.

'I will pay my vows before those who fear Him.' Psa 22:25.

'Paying your vows' is actually *giving yourself to make offering*. That is the vow.

This is not offering only before the Lord; it is offering before all of those who are part of the same culture of Christ.

That culture is the culture of those who are *established in the fear of the Lord*.

'My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. Psa 22:25.

'The poor [the poor in spirit; the broken-hearted. What will they do?] shall eat.'

They shall eat the food from the altar. This is the meal offering and the drink offering, which is the communion.

And what will happen when they eat?

'They shall be *satisfied*; those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever!' Psa 22:26.

#### **4. THE PLEASURES OF LIFE**

We will consider the fourth weed, which is 'the pleasures of life'.

The pursuit of the pleasures of life is a completely *self-centred motivation*. It is *self-gratification* in all of its forms.

I am sure that we can think of all the things that we think will give us pleasure, but we can summarise it as *self-gratification* in all its forms.

#### **Pursuing pleasure is being dead while we live**

Paul said that a person who lives in pleasure is 'dead while they live'. 1Ti 5:6.

That's extraordinary, isn't it? A person who lives in pleasure is 'dead while they live'.

The pursuit of pleasure has an obvious connection to desire, and it results in conflict, or thorny relationships.

James wrote, 'Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?' Jas 4:1.

Remember that desire is the 'other law', and that pleasure is the 'good' that you define as fulfilment for yourself.

And it generates wars and fights. There's hardly a better description of what 'clashing thorns' look like.

#### **Praying as one who is poor in spirit; Your will be done**

'You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You *fight and war*. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not

receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your *pleasures*.' Jas 4:2-3.

At times, we pray to the Lord in deception, asking Him to bless our pursuit of worldly riches.

But there is one thing that a person who is born of God, and is praying by the Spirit, is *asking*.

In the first instance, they are not asking anything because, as one who is poor in spirit and broken-hearted, they don't even know what to pray for.

Isn't that our 'weakness'?

We don't even know what to pray for, but the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses and *He* knows what to pray for. Rom 8:26-27.

He is joining us to the fellowship of Christ's *travail* which is, 'Not my will, but Yours, be done'.

If you are asking according to your own will - even if it is a good, religious pursuit - it is still a prayer from *thorny ground*.

The only way to pray or to ask according to the will of God is to *forsake* that. It's to forsake the thought that you can *define* what that is; and to pray in the Holy Spirit.

My mind is unfruitful as I begin, but then He enables me to understand, and I *know* what the will of God is, and I walk in it.

And I do not walk in it under *obligation*.

Rather, I am 'compelled by love', because I *want* to be there.

#### **True pleasure is the blessing of sonship**

This person is finding true satisfaction and the fulfilment of all desire in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The Lord does not want us to be without pleasure.

He knows, however, that finding our satisfaction through the pleasures of the flesh leads to *death*.

True pleasure, on the other hand, is found in the *blessing* that belongs to our *calling and election*.

#### **Turning from our own pleasure to communion fellowship**

'If you will turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing pleasure on My holy day ...'

[Frankly, this means that if you will turn away from pursuing the desires of riches or pleasure or

the pursuit of a lifestyle which you prioritise over communion fellowship; if you will forsake that],

‘ ... and call the gathering together and the fellowship of the body of Christ a delight [literally, articulate that as a confession], the holy day of the LORD honourable, and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I [the Lord Himself] will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.’ Isa 58:13-14.

That is a promise from God.

### **‘All these things will be given to you’**

If you will put His kingdom first, all of these things will be added to you. Mat 6:33.

What are ‘all these things’?

They are *true riches*. They are your inheritance and provision for your sonship, for you and your family.

We will continue to discuss ‘thorny ground’. As much as we have covered a lot of detail today, we are only halfway there.

We look forward to ongoing fellowship in understanding thorny ground so that we can be those who *bring forth fruit to its full measure*.