

TODAY'S THORNS / *Mark 4:18-19*

We must welcome God's Word exclusively so nothing stifles or distracts us. We must weed out or avoid the thorn patches. As James wrote, "It is a message to obey, not just to listen to" (James 1:22).

The Thorn

Worries of this life.

Society says, "Take care of yourself; no one else will."

The Problem

Fear of persecution for being identified with Christ can neutralize people who are worried that they will be ridiculed. Daily concerns, schedules, and pressures can snuff out our time and energy to grow. Worry consumes our thoughts, disrupts our productivity, and reduces our trust in God.

The Solution

James 1:12 "God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

Philippians 4:6 "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done."

Matthew 6:31 "So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing."

Deceitfulness of wealth.

Society says, "Wealth brings security, power, and happiness."

Wealth can take God's place in our lives. It can become an idol—the focus of our activities and devotion. It tempts us to deny our dependence on God, keeping our eyes off of eternal values. Wealth leads to pride.

Jeremiah 9:23 "This is what the LORD says: 'Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches.'"

Luke 12:34 "Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be."

1 Timothy 6:6 "Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth."

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."

Desires for other things.

Society says, "Indulge yourself; try it all; get all you can."

Indulging our desires leads to all kinds of problems. It weakens our will power, stifles and distracts us from growing, and leads to companions who will pull us down.

Romans 13:14 "But let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you, and don't think of ways to indulge your evil desires."

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for 'bad company corrupts good character.'"

1 Peter 1:13-14 "So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ. Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then."