

Mark 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

Analysis

Jesus explains thorny-ground hearers: 'And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word.' These hearers don't immediately reject (like path) or quickly fall away (like rocks) but experience gradual suffocation of spiritual vitality. The seed germinates and grows but gets choked by competing vegetation. This represents professing believers whose faith is progressively strangled by worldly cares and competing affections. Unlike rocky ground (dramatic apostasy), thorny ground depicts slow spiritual decline, gradual prioritization of world over Christ, imperceptible drift from kingdom focus. The danger: this can happen while maintaining religious appearance.

Historical Context

Jesus' agrarian audience understood thorns' aggressive growth—deep roots, rapid reproduction, fierce competition for resources. Palestinian farmers constantly battled invasive weeds. The spiritual application was clear: worldly concerns naturally crowd out spiritual priorities unless constantly resisted. Early church fathers warned against wealth's dangers (Clement, Cyprian). Monastic movements sought escape from worldly distractions. Reformers emphasized contentment and simplicity. Puritan William Perkins called worldliness the 'great sin of Christians.' Every generation faces thorns threatening fruitfulness.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What specific 'thorns' are currently competing for affection and attention in your life?
2. How does gradual spiritual decline occur imperceptibly while maintaining religious appearance?
3. What practices help identify and remove thorns before they completely choke your spiritual vitality?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὗτοί	εἰσιν	οἱ	εἰς	τὰς	ἀκάνθας	σπειρόμενοι·
And G2532	such as G3778	are G1526	G3588	among G1519	G3588	thorns G173	sown G4687
οὗτοί	εἰσιν	οἱ	τὸν	λόγον	ἀκούοντες		
such as G3778	are G1526	G3588	G3588	the word G3056	hear G191		

Additional Cross-References

Luke 8:14 (Parallel theme): And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.