

# Matthew 13:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

## Analysis

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'And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.' Jesus describes third response-type: thorny ground. Seeds germinate, plants grow, but 'thorns sprung up' (ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι/anebēsan hai akanthai) alongside and eventually 'choked them' (ἐπνίξαν/epnixan). Jesus explains (v.22): thorns represent 'care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches'—worldly concerns, material pursuit, and wealth's false promises. These compete with gospel for heart allegiance, ultimately suffocating spiritual life. Reformed theology sees this as describing believers whose faith is hindered by worldly entanglements—perhaps genuine conversion but fruitless life. Some interpret as false converts who showed initial promise but worldliness revealed they never truly belonged to Christ. Either way, the warning is clear: worldly cares and wealth pursuit are deadly to spiritual vitality. This hits particularly hard in affluent contexts: material comfort, career ambition, entertainment, and consumer culture 'choke' spiritual growth, preventing fruitfulness. Thorns don't need planting—they grow naturally, constantly threatening to overwhelm genuine faith.

## Historical Context

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Palestinian agriculture struggled with thorns and weeds—wild growth had to be cleared before planting, but roots and seeds remained. Without constant vigilance, thorns returned, competing for nutrients, water, and sunlight. Even successfully sprouted crops could be overwhelmed by vigorous weed growth. Jesus's image would have been immediately understood: thorny ground produces initial growth

that ultimately fails due to competition. The 'care of this world' (ἡ μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος/hē merimna tou aiōnos) includes anxiety about daily provision, pursuit of security, absorption in temporal concerns. The 'deceitfulness of riches' (ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου/hē apatē tou ploutou) exposes wealth as deceiver: it promises satisfaction but delivers emptiness, promises security but produces anxiety, promises freedom but brings bondage. Early church faced this: some abandoned faith for material gain (Demas—2 Timothy 4:10). Throughout history, prosperity has proven more dangerous to church than persecution. Contemporary Western Christianity desperately needs this warning: our affluence, busyness, and material absorption choke spiritual vitality.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What 'thorns'—worldly concerns, ambitions, pursuits—are currently competing with spiritual growth in your life?
2. How does wealth deceive people into thinking material prosperity brings satisfaction or security it cannot deliver?
3. What practices help prevent worldly cares from choking your spiritual vitality?

## Interlinear Text

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|                   |            |               |              |       |                   |            |                  |       |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|------------|------------------|-------|
| ἄλλα              | δὲ         | ἔπεσεν        | ἐπὶ          | τὰς   | ἄκανθαι           | καὶ        | ἀνέβησαν         | αἱ    |
| <b>some</b>       | <b>And</b> | <b>fell</b>   | <b>among</b> | G3588 | <b>the thorns</b> | <b>and</b> | <b>sprung up</b> | G3588 |
| G243              | G1161      | G4098         | G1909        |       | G173              | G2532      | G305             |       |
| ἄκανθαι           | καὶ        | ἀπέπνιξαν     | αὐτά         |       |                   |            |                  |       |
| <b>the thorns</b> | <b>and</b> | <b>choked</b> | <b>them</b>  |       |                   |            |                  |       |
| G173              | G2532      | G638          | G846         |       |                   |            |                  |       |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Genesis 3:18** (Parallel theme): Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

**Matthew 13:22** (Parallel theme): He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.