

Proverbs 24:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Analysis

This verse describes the neglected field's condition. 'And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns' (וְהִינֵה אֵלַי כֻּלּוֹ קִמְסוֹנִים/vehineh alah kullo qimsonim, and behold, it was all overgrown with thistles) depicts what happens when cultivation ceases. 'And nettles had covered the face thereof' (וְחַרְלָל כָּסוּ פָנָיו/charul kasu fanav, weeds covered its surface) intensifies the image of overtaken, ruined land. 'And the stone wall thereof was broken down' (וְגֵדֶר אֲבָנָיו נִהְרָסָה/vegeder avanav neherasah, and its stone fence was torn down) shows even protective structures falling to ruin. The progression is vivid: thorns, nettles, collapsed walls. What was once productive becomes wasteland. This illustrates sin's progressive destruction. Small negligence compounds—weeds seed more weeds; crumbling walls accelerate decay. Paul warned: 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump' (Galatians 5:9). Neglect in one area spreads to others. The solution requires decisive action, not gradual adjustment.

Historical Context

Ancient agricultural fields required constant maintenance. Thorns and weeds grew quickly in the Middle Eastern climate—the ground was cursed to produce them (Genesis 3:18). Stone walls protected crops from animals and marked boundaries. Without maintenance, walls crumbled as mortar eroded and animals knocked stones loose. An overgrown, wall-less field became useless—unable to produce crops. Israelites understood this viscerally. Jesus used similar agricultural imagery:

the sower's seed falling among thorns (Matthew 13:7, 22). The author observes real-world consequences to teach spiritual lessons. In Christian tradition, the 'field' represents various domains—the soul, the church, society. Without cultivation, thorns (sin, error, corruption) overtake and destroy. Church history records how neglecting doctrine, discipline, or mission leads to spiritual decline—from liberal churches abandoning Scripture to monasteries losing their mission. Constant vigilance and cultivation preserve spiritual vitality.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life show signs of 'thorns and nettles'—habits, relationships, responsibilities overtaken by neglect?
2. How does understanding that neglect compounds progressively motivate immediate action?
3. What 'walls'—protective boundaries, spiritual disciplines, accountability—have you let crumble?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה הַ	עַל הַ	כָּל וְ	קִמְשָׁנִים	כָּסוּ	פְּנֵי יוֹ
H2009	And lo it was all grown over	H3605	and nettles	had covered	the face
	H5927		H2738	H3680	H6440
יְחַלֵּי יִם	וּגְדֵר	אֲבֵן יוֹ	נִהְרָסָה:		
with thorns	wall	thereof and the stone	thereof was broken down		
H7063	H1444	H68	H2040		

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 10:18 (Parallel theme): By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

Isaiah 5:5 (Parallel theme): And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

Jeremiah 4:3 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

Hebrews 6:8 (Parallel theme): But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

Job 31:40 (Parallel theme): Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

Proverbs 20:4 (Parallel theme): The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

Proverbs 22:13 (Parallel theme): The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

Proverbs 23:21 (Parallel theme): For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Proverbs 19:23 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

Matthew 13:7 (Parallel theme): And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: