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Prep: Thorns were present at the reception: The thorns represent various goods that choke out the word. Self-evaluation is important to begin cutting down the thorns so the heart has the focus and desire to grow the word.

Outline/Plan for the next four classes:

Parable of the sower:

(Part One) Seed beside the Road: Hardheartedness and Spiritual Warfare

(Part Two) The Rocky Soil: The Temporal Believer and Christian Suffering

(Part Three) Soil among Thorns: False View of the Greatest Good

(Part Four) Good Soil: Proper Understanding According to the Eternal Perspective

Review:

1. The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-25; Luke 8:1-19).
 - a. This is the first parable concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:11) and the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10).
 - i. The messianic kingdom was anticipated by the Jews (Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 31:31-34; Dan. 7) and offered and rejected at the first advent of Christ (Matt. 3:2, 12:22-50; Mark 1:15). Jesus began teaching mysteries about the kingdom after he was rejected (Matt. 13:11).
 - ii. The mysteries pertain to the addition of Church Age believers to the kingdom, but they do not nullify any promises made to Israel (Matt. 13:52).
 - b. It is recorded that Jesus explained many of the parables to the disciples in private (Mark 4:34); however, the parable of the sower is one of two parables recorded with a clear explanation from Jesus.
 - i. Proper understanding of this parable will aide in understanding all other parables and the word of God in general (Mark 4:13); this is not by way of transferring symbolic words to every parable. (Luke 8:6, cf. 6:48)
 - c. The seed clearly refers to the word of God (Luke 8:11), but should be viewed in the context of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13:19).
2. The soil alongside the road: Hardheartedness and Satan (Mark 4:14), the evil one (Matt. 13:19), the devil (Luke 8:12)
 - a. Devil: this title reveals that Satan is a slanderer and false accuser. While Satan is behind any grand philosophy (fortress), reasoning, or idea that pops-up in contradiction to the knowledge of God, he is also the grand promoter of guilt and shame. Guilt and shame a part of the noetic effects of sin. Unchecked, they can discourage a believer from moving forward, make a believer hate God, and cause a believer to hold false views about God. Satan is always after the mind.
 - b. Satan by his system takes away the seed, but it is the condition of the heart that allows him to take it away.
 - i. The ultimate issue is attitude about truth as such (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:25).
 - ii. How does this not conflict with freewill (2 Cor. 3:12-4:4)? The concept of Satan deceiving an unbeliever so that they will not understand the gospel can

make it seem like Satan is able to prohibit freewill (2 Corinthians 3:12-4:4). Yet, it is not one's understanding of the gospel or attitude toward the gospel that ultimately prohibits a person from being saved. Attitude toward truth as such is what determines one's ability to receive the gospel. Every rational being has an intellect that does at some point realize the existence of God (Rom. 1:20). However, God holds people accountable for what they do with their intellects. The intellect is designed to seek truth. To stop seeking truth and instead seek to justify that which requires a rejection of truth is to go against the purpose and nature of the intellect. It is unnatural, similar to the unnatural act of homosexuality on a physical level.

- a. Consider an atheist who strongly opposes God and never hears a clear gospel message. He has denied the evident truth of natural Theology. He becomes deceived by a lie only because he did not seek truth as such.
- c. Satan's method of removing the word of God:
 - i. Spiritual warfare is engaged in the realm of ideas (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
 - ii. It is not wise for a man to think he is ready for battle because he has a weapon and armor. The enemy, the war, and the weapon all need to be understood.

The Rocky Soil: The Temporal Believer and Christian Suffering

1. The temporal heart and unjust suffering (Matt. 13:20-21; Mark 4:16-17, Luke 8:13).
 - a. Rocky soil: able to receive the seed but not able to cause any long term growth. The heart is not conditioned for the long haul.
 - b. Receives it with joy: The gospel and subsequent doctrines are accepted with joy.
 - i. The "understanding" was through the lens of a temporal heart.
 - ii. The sower sows the Word of God. Therefore, in this parable the teaching is accurate but the understanding is not.
 1. A single doctrine can be accurately taught to several people at the same time and every individual will understand according his view of Christianity.
 2. This parable reveals that accurate teaching can produce unfruitful believers.
 - iii. This type of believer is not seeking truth and not seeking God. This is the type that could be saved with no rewards in the eternal kingdom.
 - iv. This believer has no root in himself. Lack of virtue.
 - v. This believer is the type that joins a church for the social benefits but has no deep love for God.
 - vi. Notice the use of "immediately" for accepting and for falling away.
 - vii. Unjust suffering "because of the word" is the cause for departure. This suffering would be directly related to his relationship with God.
 - c. The nature of suffering:
 - i. "Affliction" and "persecution" are used interchangeably throughout Scripture and refer to various types of suffering.

- ii. Suffering is a negative in the sense that it always deals with the loss or denial of a good.
 - iii. Therefore, it is the attitude about the good being withheld or taken away that determines the attitude that one has in suffering.
 - iv. Suffering does not have to be accompanied by psychological misery in order to count as suffering.
- d. Suffering and joy *are* compatible (2 Cor. 7:4, 8:2; Heb. 10:32-34).
- i. Suffering can be accompanied with joy when the thing lost is considered of lesser value than the good gained.
 - ii. When suffering is viewed as a means of a greater reward, joy is enhanced (Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:7-12, 4:17).
 - iii. A right attitude about suffering does not require considering temporal goods to be bad or evil. Rather, it is all about proper value attached to the goods.
 - iv. Paul did not consider all of his earthly goods to be dung or bad as they stood alone. They were viewed that way in comparison to Christ (Phil. 3:7, 8).
 - v. Keeping this distinction in mind is important. One can view temporal things as good and enjoy temporal goods, and still not be dependent or tied to them when living for the eternal good.
 - vi. If you are not willing to suffer the loss of temporal goods you will likely suffer greater loss at the JSJC (Phil. 3:8; cf. 1 Cor. 3:15). It is like reversing Paul's statement to say, "I have suffered the loss of all eternal rewards that I may gain the enjoyment of temporal things."
- e. Suffering is endured with joy due to hope in the eternal (2 Thess. 1:4-7).
- i. Notice that the removal of suffering is expected at the return of Christ and they are suffering for the kingdom of God.
 - ii. Both types of suffering are identical to the parable of the sower.
- f. Suffering is not considered with joy because we have been promised that it will be removed in the temporal life (Rev. 2:8-11; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Thess. 3:3-4; Hebrews 11).
- i. It is not true that salvation delivers you from suffering.
 - ii. In what manner should believers be encouraged during suffering?
- g. Suffering is part of service for God (Acts 9:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:7-12, 2 Tim. 2:3-9, 3:12).
- i. Paul was told how much he would suffer shortly after his conversion (Acts 9:15-16).
 - ii. Believers should also know that suffering is to be expected for those who follow Christ.
- h. Suffering for Christ should be viewed as a privilege and a gift from God (Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29; 1 Peter 2:18-21, 3:14, 17, 4:1, 12-14, 19, 5:8-10).
- i. A biblical view of suffering is needed to properly understand the Word of God (Rom. 8:28).