



The Gift of Thorns

by

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Spring is a wonderful time of the year. It brings us warmer temperatures, rain, flowers, leaves on the trees and ... thorns. My wife and I were working in the back yard recently and we were quickly reminded that we have trees and bushes filled with thorns. Feeling, then seeing the thorns, reminded us of the tremendous gift God gave us.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:17-19

Thorns are a reminder of an important and powerful truth: we are sinners in a sinful world. The human race is separated from the God Who created the world and everything in it. The ground we stand on is cursed because of our sin. The cursed ground brought forth thorns and thistles, which makes working the ground hard and painful. It also reminds us that we will one day die and return to the ground. We are a needy people. That truth is a wonderful gift from God so we don't forget. People are saved

after they realize they're lost. The cursed earth, the sorrow, the thorns and thistles, the sweat and toil and our eventual death are all reminders of our need for God's Love, Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness.

And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Numbers 33:50-55

Thorns are a painful reminder of sin. Fortunately, when we know the truth, thorns point us toward salvation. It is true now and has been true through the centuries of human existence. Thorns were a reminder to Israel of its disobedience to God and need for forgiveness and to return to the path of righteousness God set for them from the beginning.

Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them. Proverbs 22:5

In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares, but he who guards his soul stays far from them. NIV

The path of the wicked is not pretty. It may look that way at first, but it is ugly and painful. Millions of people around the world know this truth. They know how terrible it is to be wicked. But the person who guards his soul stays far from them. The lost of our world don't have many choices. They may think they do, but all paths lead to death. The only Path that leads to Life is Jesus Christ. He said He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ is the One Who will guard and protect our soul for eternity. He is the One Who will keep us from the path filled with thorns and snares. We must believe Him and trust Him at His Word.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man. Proverbs 24: 30-34

Thorns grow where people are lazy. It takes hard work and perseverance to keep thorns from taking over a garden or yard. We have to be on the lookout for them. We have to be diligent. The field of the slothful and the vineyard of the man void of understanding is grown over with thorns. That can happen to any of us spiritually. If we become lazy and uncaring and forget to watch carefully over our spiritual lives, we will one day awaken to find our lives covered over with thorns. We find ourselves impoverished and bankrupt in spiritual things. It is not a difficult task to keep thorns from taking over our yard, but it is something we have to pay attention to daily. How does a garden go from being free of thorns to being overrun with them? It's a matter of inattention over time. A yard that is overgrown with thorns will take more time and hard work and heartache than if we watched over it lovingly each day destroying the first signs of thorns

instead of being destroyed by them. May we consider it well and receive instruction.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
Matthew 7:15-20

The natural laws of God are easy to see. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. Good trees bring forth good fruit and corrupt trees bring forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. That's a natural law. So is the spiritual law that people will be known by the fruits of their lives. What matters is not what they say or do... it's what they are. People can say anything and do anything to get what they want. Lying is easy. Truth is what's hard and truth is the fruit of a person's life. A gardener inspects the fruit of a tree as it matures. They know what kind of fruit the tree is producing and know what kind of fruit they will harvest. So we can know what kind of spiritual fruit we're producing and

what kind of spiritual fruit will come at harvest time. Do we like what we see? Are we producing what we want? What God wants? If not, we can revisit the spiritual laws of God and be fruitful for Him. It's not too late to be all God wants you to be.

The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Matthew 13:1-9

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. Luke 8:14 NIV

Here are more spiritual laws about fruitfulness. Where should we sow spiritual seeds? Along the wayside where birds devour them? On stony places where the seeds withered away because they were not able to root and develop protection from the scorching sun? Among thorns where the seeds would be choked out as they tried to grow? Anyone who wants to harvest a good crop from what they sow is not going to choose any of those places. The wise sower will choose good ground and will harvest a great amount of delicious fruit. That delicious spiritual fruit is the fruit of the Spirit of God and is known clearly and specifically in Paul's letter to the Galatians. We will be wise to the dangers of being choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. We want to bring forth mature fruit. If we have spiritual ears, we will hear.

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. Matthew 27:18-23

Thorns represent sin, evil, wickedness and disobedience to God. The soldiers placed a crown of thorns on the precious head of God's Son. They mocked Him, spit upon Him and hit him on the head with a reed. Then, they took Christ away to crucify Him. Jesus, wearing a thorny crown pushed deep into His head, bled and died to pay the penalty for our sins, our evil, our wickedness and our disobedience to God. How perfect the picture of the Lamb of God, wearing a crown of thorns, dying to make a path for us to follow that will lead us away from the pain of earthly and spiritual thorns. There will be no thorns in Heaven! No pain, no sorrow, no tears, no bloody hands or feet; just the sweet Love of Jesus.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. NIV

Paul was a spiritual man. He knew the spiritual laws of God. He was an apostle, a preacher, a teacher, an evangelist, a missionary for Christ. Yet, God gave Paul a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Why? So he wouldn't be exalted. Paul learned a phenomenal lesson that God's Grace is sufficient for His children. God's Strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul learned to glory in his infirmities so the power of Christ would rest upon him. Paul learned that when he was weak, then he was strong. Easy lesson to learn? I don't think so. It may be one of the toughest lessons for us to learn, but learn it we must. All glory and praise belongs to God. We are His children, His servants. He is the Master. He is the One before Whom all peoples of the earth will kneel, bow and worship.

Do I want thorns in my backyard? No. But do I learn from the thorns in my backyard? Yes. May we all learn the lesson of God's gift of thorns.

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If you would like more information about Grace Martial Arts classes in your area, contact Senior Instructor Mark McGee at gracemartialarts1@gmail.com.

Saved and Safe!

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14