They Become Unfruitful

Mark 4:18,19

*"Now these are the ones sown among thorns: they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."* NKJV

 As Christians, we should be prepared to show others the light and love of Christ through our life. Jesus tells His followers they are "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13) and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). God uses us to shine light in dark places and make the world taste good. Therefore, when someone sees or hears us, they should know that we are separated from the world. Our life is a living testimony of the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus. Everything we do, say, and think should bring honor to Him. Paul says *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”* (Colossians 3:17).

 Jesus refers to the way we live our lives as "fruit." The manner of living can either be good or bad. Jesus teaches *"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them"* (Matthew 7:16-20). Notice that our association with Jesus is known by what fruit we produce.

 In the parable of the Sower, Jesus says thorny ground people hear the word and to think about. For someone to "become unfruitful." they must first be fruitful. Thus, at some point, their life showed signs of their salvation. They may have been a part of a congregation of believers and participated in fellowship or Bible studies with other believers. They may have even taken Communion or given tithes. According to Jesus, this would have been them bearing "good fruit." However, somewhere they stopped producing those things necessary to bear good fruit. With this, questions may arise: Is this person still saved? Did they lose their salvation? Was this person ever a follower of Christ? When we are saved, aren't we *always* saved?

 These are great questions. Thank God that *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue* (2 Peter 1:3). Let us see what He says about this issue:

* **1 Corinthians 15:1,2** - *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which 1 preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain*. Notice the conditional statement that we are saved by the gospel IF we stand firm in the words of the gospel. Not doing so would mean that we believed "in vain."
* **Colossians 1:21-23** - *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister*. Again, notice the conditional statement that we are holy, blameless, and above reproach IF we continue in the faith. We become alienated from and enemies of Jesus once again if we do not continue in it.
* **1 Thessalonians 5:19** - *Do not quench the Spirit*. The original Greek word means "to extinguish" or "to suppress." There is a point when we can suppress the Holy Spirit's guidance and conviction long enough to finally extinguish Him. When we choose to continue to live a life of sin, we are getting dangerously close to this.
* **1 Timothy 4:1-3** - *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*. Many people say that if a Christian departs from the faith, they were never a Christian to begin with. Well, the Spirit "expressly says" that some Christians *will* depart from the faith. Take the Holy Spirit's word not the opinions of people!
* **1 Timothy 6:10** *- For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*. This verse directly applies to our study about thorny ground people. Notice that "the deceitfulness of riches" makes the lover of money stray from the faith.
* **Hebrews 6:4-6** - *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame*. There is zero doubt that the writer of Hebrews is describing a Christian: "once enlightened;" "have tasted the heavenly gift;" "have become partakers of the Holy Spirit;" "have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come." It is impossible for thorny ground people to renew themselves to Christ once they completely reject the faith. They are forever lost.
* **2 Peter 2:20-22** - *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."* This is a frightening passage... Peter says that it would be better for someone to have never been saved than to have been saved just to be entangled again in the sins of their pre-saved life.

 Each of these passages confirms the necessity for us to bear good fruit throughout our life and continue steadfastly in the faith. However, those who teach "once saved, always saved," quote Jesus in John 10:29: *"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* While it is true that when we are committed to Christ no one can take us from the Father's hand, they fail to note that the Father can remove us from His hand (John 15:5,6). We can also take ourselves out of His hand. This is why Jesus warns "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 7:19). Therefore, "*look to yourselves, that you do not lose those things which we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward"* (2 John 1:8). Being able to overcome the thorns of the world is crucial to our relationship with Jesus and our eternal life. Do not become unfruitful but continue to bear good fruit!