

Only God can create true faith by pulling out the weeds of unbelief from our hearts. He is the omniscient Farmer, who can sow the good seed of His Word in our hearts. He gives power to His Son and Spirit to change the soil of our hearts from evil, hard, unfruitful and even dead ground into fruitful hearts of faith, by His sovereign grace alone.

**Mon/Tues: Read Matthew 13:18-23****Cast Thy Burdens**

In the Parable of the Sower, the first soil proves impenetrable to even the hearing of God's word. There is a willful blindness and inability to hear or see the things of the Kingdom of God. The second soil "receives the word with joy," appearing for a time to believe it, but in the end lacks the root of saving grace. There is no conversion; no new birth by the Spirit, and no eternal life. The seed withers.

What can we say about the third soil, described for us in Matthew 13:22, which ends up being choked to death by covetousness and the cares of this life? As in the first two soils, such a choking to death of the young plant of an outward profession of faith proves *that none of these first three soils* describes a real, saving faith. They are pictures of those who "taste of the Heavenly gift, and of the powers of the world to come," as Hebrews 6 puts it, but never by faith "swallow" the Gospel message to the salvation of their souls. In short, the weed-choked ground, as the shallow and hardened soils before it, are all descriptive of the *unbelieving response of Israel* to Jesus Christ. Though they were drawn to Him for His miracles and the power of His teaching, they never embraced Him as their Savior and Lord.

But does this weed-choked ground have nothing to teach the believer? Far from it, for the same sinful tendencies reside in our hearts as in the breasts of the unbeliever and must be mortified progressively by the Spirit of God (See Romans 8:12-13). We must be watchful in particular against the distractions and cares of this life, as the many warnings against such sinful cares prove.

Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.  
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,  
And wither as the green herb. (Ps 37:1-2)

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;  
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,  
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.  
Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;  
Do not fret—it only causes harm. (Ps. 37:7-8)

These words from the Psalmist address the very heart worries which can embitter and harden us over time. The lesson of how to protect ourselves from the soul-destroying anxiety which can make us unable to hear the word of God and its reassuring promises, is that we must fill our hearts and minds with the holy expressions of anxiety in the Psalms. We must seek to "roll our burdens" of anger and frustration with how this world short-changes us, therefore, onto the massive shoulders of our God.

Commit your way to the LORD,  
trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.  
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,  
and your justice as the noonday. (Psalm 37: 5)

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, we are at times consumed with sadness because of our trials and feel unjustly treated by this world, and even ignored by your own people. Thank you for recording that David the Psalmist knew these feelings. Help us to cast our cares upon you, remembering the promise of Psalm 55:22 that you indeed care for us. Help us to roll the heavy burdens of worry and the cares of this world upon you, confessing that we are too weak to even lift these burdens to give them to you. All we can do is roll them and have you pick them up. Amen.

Sing about what obedience to Psalm 37:5 means when it comes to resisting the cares of this world.

*Cast thy burden on the Lord,  
Only lean upon His Word;  
Thou wilt soon have cause to bless  
His eternal faithfulness.*

*He sustains thee by His hand,  
He enables thee to stand;  
Those whom Jesus once hath loved  
From His grace are never moved.*

*Human counsels come to naught;  
That shall stand which God hath wrought;  
His compassion, love, and power,  
Are the same forevermore.*

*Jesus, Guardian of They flock,  
Be Thyself our constant Rock  
Make us, by Thy powerful hand,  
Strong as Zion's mountain stand.*

**Wednesday: Read Matthew 13:18-23 and Psalm 37:23-27**

**By the Hand**

The “worries of this life” form such a danger to believers who seek to live fruitful lives of real faith. One antidote is to consider how active God is on our behalf to provide all we need. In other words, we can “commit our way” to the Lord instead of “fretting” over the success of the wicked (Psalm 37:1-5) because God’s support and commitment to us are so great. Even when wickedness would take possession of our hearts, God snatches us back from the billows of sin and judgment to keep our faith from drowning.

In terms of Psalm 37:24, God is able to ensure that, even though we will at times stumble and fall into sin, we will nonetheless not be “cast headlong” into destruction and the loss of our salvation. Is not David, the author of this Psalm, a great example of God’s *restraining him from such soul-destroying sin*? Though he was guilty of great iniquity and did not deserve to be forgiven and cleansed (Psalm 51), God did not allow him to remain wallowing in his guilt and blindness. He brought conviction, repentance, renewed faith, and restoration into

David's life. God literally and figuratively took David "by the hand" (Psalm 37:24) and pulled him back from the abyss when the Devil must have thought that David had sinned himself right into the very bosom of Hell!

**Meditate and Pray:** Countless times when God pulls us back from the destruction by which Satan and sin seek to condemn us. Time and again the Devil's hopes are dashed as God saves us at the eleventh hour, when the midnight of eternal judgment draws nigh! Sing about such rescue, when God guards our steps, using Trinity Hymnal # 486:

*God, be merciful to me,  
On Thy grace I rest my plea;  
Plenteous in compassion Thou,  
Blot out my transgressions now;  
Wash me, make me pure within,  
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.*

*My transgressions I confess,  
Grief and guilt my soul oppress;  
I have sinned against Thy grace  
And provoked Thee to Thy face;  
I confess Thy judgment just,  
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.*

*I am evil, born in sin;  
Thou desirest truth within.  
Thou alone my Savior art,  
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;  
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,  
Wash me whiter than the snow.*

*Broken, humbled to the dust  
By Thy wrath and judgment just,  
Let my contrite heart rejoice  
And in gladness hear Thy voice;  
From my sins O hide Thy face,  
Blot them out in boundless grace.*

*Gracious God, my heart renew,  
Make my spirit right and true;  
Cast me not away from Thee,  
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;  
Thy salvation's joy impart,  
Steadfast make my willing heart.*

*Sinners then shall learn from me  
And return, O God, to Thee;  
Savior, all my guilt remove,  
And my tongue shall sing Thy love;  
Touch my silent lips, O Lord,  
And my mouth shall praise accord.*

**Thursday: Read Matthew 13:22-30 and John 14:1&27; 16:20-22 & v33**

**Sorrow Overcome**

We close our consideration of the "weeds of worry" which choke the seed of the Gospel (Matt.13:22) with the sweet antidote of Scripture written to ease our anxieties and fears.

See how graciously Jesus' words in John 14-16 counteract our self-centered anxiety, by persistently pointing us to the peace which "the world cannot give" (John 14:27). Jesus is able to reach into our hearts, dealing with deep troubles and fears which we cannot control. These are the limiting beliefs which wall in our vision of what God is able to do. His piercing strength controls even our heart's thoughts and emotions.

**Meditate and Pray:**

- Let not your hearts not to be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. (John 14:1)
- Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. (John 14:27)
- You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. (John 16:20)
- You have sorrow now,, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (John 16:22)
- Until now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)
- I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

**Friday: Read John 16:33 and Philippians 4:6-7****Take Heart**

Just as Jesus gave prominence to His promise of peace for His troubled disciples in the upper room, so the Apostle Paul promises that the “peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

What exactly is this Peace which we so desperately need as an antidote from our tendency towards fear and anxiety? These passages more fully illustrate its many facets:

- Peace with God through Jesus Christ’s death – John 20:19-21 & Romans 5:1-10.
- Peace which removes enmity between believers as well as the enmity of our sins against God - Ephesians 2:13-18.
- Peace by which our thoughts are fixed on what Christ has done - Ephesians 6:17 & Philippians 4:7-8.
- Peace which guards our hearts and minds from *being destroyed by anxiety* -- Philippians 4:4-7.

**Meditate and Pray:** How we should thank God for the richness of His gift of peace to His children through Jesus Christ. First of all, we are foundationally given objective peace through Christ’s *atonement* on the Cross, a peace *with* God through reconciliation and salvation from God’s wrath due to us for our sin. Overflowing this foundation, we discover an ever-growing *experiential peace* which is increasingly controls all our mind, body, and spirit.