

word—to grieve the Holy Spirit, or to quench the flame just kindled in your breast. And then the rock will surely be softened by that gracious influence, and the word of God will take deep root in your hearts, and bring forth abundant fruit to His glory and your eternal salvation!

The parable says further—“*Some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.*” And these are they “*which, when they have heard go forth, and are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*” Alas! how easily are religious impressions obliterated, and the aspirations of a growing piety stifled within us! There is many a one whose heart is on the Lord’s-day touched with a sense of divine things, and who begins the week with some of the effects of his Sabbath’s devotion about him, who gradually becomes absorbed in the business of his calling, or the pleasures of life, till his resolutions are forgotten, and his prayers grow cold, and he reaches the end of the week as worldly, as selfish, as far from God and heaven as before. And thus, too, there are those who have experienced a time when the word of God came powerfully home to them—a Sabbath, as it were, in their spiritual life; and, sinners as they felt they were, they knew the comfort of throwing themselves upon their Saviour’s merits, and trusting their all to the love of the God who had made a covenant with them in righteousness. They felt for a time as if they could not wilfully disobey so gracious and merciful a Lord. They hated sin. They purposed, and sincerely at the time, to give themselves up to God’s service. But they were not careful to watch and pray lest they entered into temptation, and the cares of this world gradually stole into their hearts; they became more and more absorbed in the pursuit of wealth, or wrapped up in their daily occupation; covetousness, under the name of prudence or honest industry, grew upon them; or they indulged themselves in pleasure till it became the chief object for which they lived; or they sank into slumber of self-indulgent ease. Their religious feelings are stifled, conscience is ill at ease, and makes an occasional struggle, but is overborne; the promise of their former profession is contradicted; the seed fell and took root you may in moderation innocently enjoy; the cares of life will in their hearts, but *the thorns sprang up with it and choked it*, and it brings no fruit to perfection. Are any of these correct pictures of anyone who reads these words? Be assured, my brother, that you cannot serve God and Mammon—you cannot serve God and be a constant votary of pleasure—you cannot love God with all your heart and mind, and soul and strength, while you love yourself and the world so much. “Choose, then, this day whom ye will serve.” “If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.”* You are, indeed, to attend to business, and not to be slothful in it; you are blessed with many pleasures, which demand some share of your attention; but let them not choke up the seed of the Word. Let the love of God hold the first place in your affections; let the will of God take precedence in your lives;

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.