

Big Picture - Heat, Thorns, Cross, Fruit

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Perhaps some of you like camping, hiking in the woods. And when you go for a hike in the woods and there's no trails, nothing to guide you by. You don't have a map.

Perhaps you have just a compass or if you're unprepared you left even that at home. If you're doing that and you begin to focus all of your attention on the particular trees that you're seeing.

You look at the trees and you're learning everything about their bark and the foliage, the leaves on them. And that's all you're focusing on. The details of the particular trees with no regard for your overall location.

Where that tree that you're looking at is in the bigger forest. Then you're going to get lost. You might observe and learn a lot about particular trees. You might be able to wax eloquent on the difference between the foliage between an oak tree and a maple tree.

But if you're lost in the woods and you can't find your way out, that knowledge isn't going to do you any good. You'll never be able to share it with anyone. You've gotten lost in the forest because you were focusing too much on the trees.

[1:06] There has to be some balance in the way we look at the forest and the trees. If we're going to not get lost in the woods and learn something along the way. I'm saying don't stop and look at the trees, but make sure you know where that tree is in relation to the bigger forest.

But what about the way we look at God's Word? Do you appreciate more the trees or the forest when you read the Bible?

I want us to see today the importance of the big picture. To look at the forest today. God's Word is more than just a set of directions on this area of my life or this area.

When we read God's Word, I think our tendency, at least mine, can be to focus in on the trees. I'm struggling with X and so I'm going to see what the Bible says about X.

And that's good and we should do that and we need to do that. And don't understand anything otherwise this morning. And whether X is parenting or anger or lying or marriage or hard work or relationships, we rightly want to know what God's Word says about that topic.

[2:14] But the Bible is much more than just a compendium of truth about the various issues that we face, that we encounter in our life. It's a way of looking at all of life as a whole.

And so as you're reading the Bible, do you ever stop and take a step back to see where what you're reading fits in the bigger picture? Where it fits in the larger scheme of things in Scripture and in your life.

It's what we want to do today and really for the rest of the book that we're studying together, *How People Change* by Tim Lane and Paul Tripp. We want to get the big picture from God's Word about what life in this fallen world is like, who we are as fallen human beings, who He is as Savior and Lord of all things, and how He progressively transforms us by His grace.

And we might look at particular examples along the way. We'll talk about anger and child raising and so on as examples of how to look at this big picture.

But we want, more importantly, to give you a biblical framework through which to view all of those things. A way to view them in the manner that God views them. To view them through the lens of Scripture.

[3:28] And so this book should help us, whatever our problems are, to handle them God's way. Whether you've got trouble in your marriage, or parenting trouble, or temper problems, or struggles with worry and fear and envy and doubt and discouragement, or just general spiritual lethargy.

You feel dry. Not alive in your Christian life. Whatever the problem is, this big picture, in addition to what God's Word says specifically about those things, this bigger picture of how to look at all of life through the Word of God should guide us through all of those problems and more.

On your handout there, the first quote, God enters our lostness with the comprehensive and practical wisdom of His Word. The Bible unfolds life as God sees it, inviting us to know God, to know ourselves, to know life, and to know how God works to undo the damage sin has done to each of us.

The Bible is the ultimate spiritual compass, able to tell us exactly where we are, and where we need to go. And we need this. If you want to be able to make sense of the particular details in your life, the particular struggles that you have, you've got to have a sense of the big picture of what God is doing with you, and the situation that you're in in this world, where He's taking you from where you've been.

You need that to deal with the particulars. And so, our authors give us a diagram that summarizes a whole lot of biblical truth and condenses it into this picture.

[5:01] And there's a quote there on how to use the diagram. The biblical picture is meant to be a mirror. A mirror you use to see yourself as you are. It is a diagnostic tool, telling you what is wrong inside.

A map that helps you see where you are and how to get where you need to go. It is a shovel to help you dig beneath words and actions to understand why you do what you do. It will also remind you that you are never alone in your struggle and that everything you need has been provided in Christ. Each element of the picture is about your life in relationship to God. You'll notice there's four primary elements to this picture that summarizes so much biblical truth.

There's heat, there's thorns, there's the cross, and there's fruit. You see that in the diagram. And I just want to make note of something before we go on. On the other side, the side that has the two diagrams, down at the bottom, there's a statement regarding copyright and permission.

I did obtain that permission from New Growth Press, who publishes the book. I have that letter if any of you want to see it. But one of the reasons I bring it up is that if you would want to share this diagram with your friends or someone, I ask you not to make any more copies of it.

[6:17] The permission that I received was limited to the copies that you hold in your hands today, and so please don't reproduce that. You can feel free to show it to others, but don't make any more copies of it, please.

So we've got these diagrams. We're back on the front side now. And while it draws on truth from many different places in Scripture, all of the elements can be seen right here in Jeremiah 17, where we've turned.

God is speaking to the straying people of Judah, and so notice with me, Jeremiah 17, we'll read verses 5 through 10. And see if you see heat and thorns and cross and fruit here.

This is what the Lord says. Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands. He will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. [7:28] He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes. Its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

Hear any echoes of Psalm 1 there? The righteous man planted by streams of living water, bearing fruit in season. Well, there's these different elements here. There's heat in verses 6 and 8.

It's talking about a desert, a wasteland. And the heat that comes, and the tree that's planted by the stream doesn't fear when the heat comes. Because it's got that source of water flowing into it. But you see the heat. And that's life in the fallen world that we live in. There's some kind of heat every day in your life. There was for the people of Judah too. And the question is, how do you respond when you face that heat?

[8:32] What comes out? Is it thorns? Is it sinful behavior? Or is it fruit? Is it righteous behavior? The things that God wants to see in our lives. And when you think about heat this morning, and as you look at your life, I don't want you to just think about the hard things that come, the difficult things.

Think about some of the blessings that come too. Those things can produce heat in your life. You get a promotion at work and a raise. And that's a good thing. We don't think of that as heat and hard, but it's going to produce a whole new set of temptations.

Be the temptation to pride. The temptation to take that increased income and use it all for yourself without thinking about the needs of others.

So when you think about heat, don't just think about the negative things that come. It's any situation that you face in life that's going to produce some sort of response, whether it's one of thorny sinfulness or fruitful godliness.

So there's this heat. But then, if you've been soaking up the cross and our Lord, the life-giving water, then you'll be able to produce fruit even when the heat still comes.

[9:40] Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. Tree planted by the water doesn't fear when the heat comes. No worries in a year of drought. Never fails to produce fruit.

That's the one who is thinking on Christ and His cross. They can even bear fruit when there's a drought. Every year in my yard, I start the spring out well.

I get the fertilizer and the crabgrass preventer down and it starts to look green and good and I get the first weed killer and fertilizer down and there's rain in the spring.

And then the summer comes. And I'm not very good about watering my lawn and I'm a tightwad and I don't want to spend the two extra dollars that would be on my water bill or whatever to water my lawn.

And in my lawn, without the water, it gets brown and crispy by about middle to end of June and July. And it sort of stays brown and crispy until things begin to get a little bit cooler or I break down and water it for a few days or we get some much needed rain.

[10:43] It doesn't have a source somewhere. It's not planted by a river. It's not drawing on anything. And so without the water, it dries. It doesn't produce any fruit. But you, when the heat comes, you can be in the middle of June and July.

And if you're rooted in Christ and you're drawing the life-giving water from Him, then you can produce fruit even in the hottest, most difficult periods of your life.

But then there's those who don't trust in the Lord. In verses 5 and 6, and you see what they're like. They're like a bush in the wastelands. Think of a dry thorn bush.

So dry it crackles and pops under the least pressure or heat. Verse 13, skip down a little bit. O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame.

Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water. You can either cling to the Lord, the spring of living water, and be able to produce heat, or if you forsake Him, then all you'll have is thorns and dust.

[11:46] Christ is the living water, and if we have Him, we can produce fruit. And then there's also God's emphasis, not just on outward behavior, but on the heart in verses 9 and 10. Our conduct flows out of what's in our hearts, and so God's concern, not just His concern with behavior, will be judged according to it, but not just that, but by what's in our heart as well.

And so there's these four elements here. And there's a comment from our authors about each of them. They're on your handout. There's heat. This is the person's situation in daily life with difficulties, blessings, and temptations.

And the thorns. This is the person's ungodly response to the situation. It includes behavior. The heart driving the behavior. And the consequences that result. When you start thinking about the category of thorns in your life, and you're thinking about your anger, and your discouragement, and your worry, these things that crop up in the face of trouble, don't just think about the behavior.

Think about the heart that's behind the behavior. And also about the consequences that it produces. When you sow thorns, when you sow this wicked behavior, it's going to reap consequences.

It's going to affect your relationships with others negatively. It's going to hurt your relationship with God. He's going to have to discipline you. And no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

[13:06] And so if you're sowing thorns, if that's what you're doing, then there's going to be consequences. That's all included in the thorns. The heart, the behavior, the consequences that come from it.

But there's the cross then. And this focuses on the presence of God and His redemptive glory and love. Through Christ, He brings comfort, cleansing, and the power to change. And then there's the

fruit.

And this too has the heart, the actual behavior, and the consequences. This is the person's new godly response to the situation, resulting from God's power at work in the heart. It includes behavior, the heart renewed by grace, and the harvest of consequences that follow.

So, you take a look at that and you go, I'm over on the right side of the diagram. I'm in the thorns. I've got the heart that needs work.

I'm wanting and worshiping the wrong things, and I'm reaping the consequences of it. My life is sort of in a shambles. My relationships are strained at best and broken down at worst.

[14:08] And I'm over here in the thorns. Well, the way you get from the thorns to the good fruit is through the cross. You see the arrow goes around the bottom of the diagram.

You don't just wake up one morning and say, I'm going to try really hard to produce good fruit today. I'm going to work really hard at it. No, you go to the cross and you say, I can't produce this fruit without you, Lord.

I can't face the heat that I'm going to face today. I already know it's coming. I can't face it without Christ dwelling in me. And so the change comes when we move from the thorns to the fruit, but it only comes as we do so through the cross.

Turn over to the back of your handout. This diagram is then applied to a couple of passages in Scripture. And turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10.

Over to the New Testament now, 1 Corinthians 10. And we'll see how this diagram, you can take it and look for these elements as you read through your Bible.

[15:12] We'll use this passage as an example this morning. See how these things apply. The passage is reminding the readers, the Corinthians and us, about the heat that was endured by the Israelites as they went from Egypt towards the Promised Land, as they were coming through the wilderness before they had investigated the Promised Land.

And this is prior to their 40 years of wandering because of their sin. This is prior to that. It's on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land and the struggles and the challenges that they faced. And so, notice together, the lesson that Paul gives us from the history of Israel.

We'll read verses 1-14 of 1 Corinthians 10. For I do not want you to be ignorant of the facts, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our heart on evil things as they did.

[16:26] Do not be idolaters as some of them were. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry. We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did.

And in one day, 23,000 of them died. We should not test the Lord as some of them did and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. So here the Israelites are moving towards the promised land and they're facing difficulty.

[17:28] They didn't think they had any food and water and God provides water from the rock and manna from the sky. And yet the people continue to complain. And don't turn there, but just listen to some of the responses of the people of Israel to the heat, the pressure that they faced in their lives.

These things are remarkable, but take a look at your own life and see if you don't see some of your responses in these things. These are from the book of Numbers from chapters 11 through 13 and 14.

Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord. The Israelites started wailing and said, if only we had meat to eat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost.

They apparently forgot about the cost of slavery. Anyway, if only we had meat to eat. We ate fish in Egypt at no cost. Also the cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic.

But now we have lost our appetite. We never see anything but this manna. They take the provision of God and make it a source of complaint. And then Moses, righteous Moses, he asked the Lord, why have you brought this trouble on your servant?

[18:42] What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms as a nurse carries an infant to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers?

Where can I get meat for these people? They keep wailing to me, give us meat to eat. I cannot carry all these people by myself. The burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you're going to treat me, put me to death right now if I've found favor in your eyes.

And do not let me face my own ruin. Whoa. Now I hope you would never actually think of talking that way to God, but as our attitudes sometimes reflect, that very heart that Moses had of complaining.

You see some thorns cropping up in the Israelites as they face the heat. Miriam and Aaron complain against Moses because you've got a Christian. You're like, what? They're complaining. And then the spies go to check out the land and come back and say, it's land flowing with milk and honey.

Look at this huge cluster of grapes. You've got to carry it between two men on a pole. But the people are way too big. They're giants. We were like grasshoppers in their sight. We can't.

[19:51] We can't take that land. We can't do that. You see, they feel a little heat. And what do they do? They complain. They say, we can't do it. They look at it in their own strength and they say, we can't do it.

And then all the people, except for Caleb and Joshua, join in. That night, all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron. And the whole assembly said to them, if only we had died in Egypt or in this desert. And they said to each other, we should choose a leader and go back to Egypt. And they had some serious trouble. They had some serious heat in the wilderness. But they also were very good at complaining.

You see the heat and then the thorns. And you see how similar their responses are to ours. And if we complain in the face of trouble, we begin to blame God and others.

And we can profit if we learn from Israel's response and seek to not make it our response. And you see how Paul applies it then to the Corinthians and to us. You bring your own heat to the passage.

[20:57] Again, whatever it is in your life. A tough day at work or sickness or disobedient children or temptation like Paul talks about in verse 13. The thorns the Israelites produced beyond complaining are in verses 6-10.

They engaged in idolatry, pagan revelry, sexual immorality. They tested the Lord. They grumbled. Some sharp thorns. And you see how the diagram divides up the heart.

This is on the back side. Number three. There's the thorn tree. And there's the heart at the bottom. Setting our hearts on evil things. That's where it started.

They didn't think what God had provided was enough. And so they set their heart on evil things. And that produced this evil behavior. The things we just mentioned. The sexual immorality and so on.

But it also produces consequences. There's judgment. Their bodies were scattered across the desert. They were bitten by snakes. The angel of the Lord came. 23,000 of them were killed in one day.

[21:54] There were consequences to their thorny behavior and their bad heart. Everything we say and do has some result or consequence. We harvest what we plant and every day we plant seed we will harvest in the future.

Just a small example of how there's consequences to everything that we do. Everything that we sow. Your thorny behavior is going to produce consequences.

This is all on the thorny side of the diagram. Jerry goes to a good church. And he took the parenting class when it was offered. But Jerry's teenage son is verbally confrontational. There's the heat. A confrontational son. This disrespect drives Jerry crazy. There's thorns in his heart. Jerry gets into his son's face and yells at him telling him that he is not going to take this disrespect any longer.

There's thorns in his behavior. This results in a distant and angry relationship with his son. There's the thorny consequences that come from his behavior. So you've got the problem in the heart. [22:57] It shows itself in behavior and then you reap the consequences of it just as Israel did. Thankfully, we're not left on that side of the diagram. The cross is in verses 1-4.

God was with Israel in the wilderness. He did provide for them through Christ the rock and He does so for us as well. Their hope is our hope. It's Jesus.

One and the same. The hope Paul talks about is a person. His name is Christ. He is the spiritual food that gives you health and vitality to face difficulties.

He is the spiritual drink that quenches the thirst that the heat in your life produces. Christ sustains me so that I can live with Him and for Him even when I struggle. And so Christ is the food, the drink, everything that we need in the heat of life.

And so the fruit it should produce is that instead of embracing those thorns, we turn to God who's able to bear us up in the midst of trial and temptation. We're warned by Israel's example so we don't go down that road, verse 11.

[24:02] We watch that we don't fall, verse 12. We stand up under temptation, verse 13. We shun idolatry, verse 14. There's all this good fruit that comes when we are centered on Christ and trusting God instead of complaining against Him.

Now we're not going to take the time to look at this one this morning, but we could... There's 2 Corinthians 1 also there. That's on the right side of the back. The number 4 on your handout. And sometime, if you've got some time, read it.

This is sort of a personal case study of how this diagram applied to the life of the Apostle Paul when he was facing trouble. And on your own time, you can read 2 Corinthians 1, 3 to 11.

Do it with that diagram in your hand and see if you can see the four elements. The heat, the thorns, the cross, and the fruit as you do that on your own. If we have time today, we may come back to that, but I don't think that we will.

So we've got this diagram, something with which to look at our lives. And there's heat. Whether the heat of suffering or the heat of blessing.

[25:07] And I want us to think together for a few moments this morning about some of these elements of the diagram and how they work out in our lives. And as we do this, and the rest of the book are chapters.

There's two on heat, there's two on thorns, two on the cross, and two on fruit. And as we go through the rest of the book and the lesson today, I don't want you to think about heat and thorns generically.

Oh, I've got trouble in my life. Oh, I've got sinful responses. And as we discuss it here, I don't want you to think just about what other people are facing. I want you to get really personal with yourself. And think about the heat that you face on a daily basis.

And think about the sinful responses that it produces in your heart and in your behavior. And then take those things to the cross and seek to find help there. But you understand what I'm saying.

And don't leave this out in the realm of the abstract and the theoretical. You bring it right home. I don't know exactly what all of your heat and what all of your thorns are. So, without divulging necessarily your particular struggles, let's discuss some of the things that bring us heat.

[26:17] Let's start with heat. What are the things that come in your life? We've mentioned some already today. And this isn't anything necessarily profound. But let's flesh out together what some of that heat looks like.

What situations come into your life, the lives of others around you that cause us to produce some response, either thorns or fruit. What is some of that heat in your life? Whether good or bad.

Excuse me? Self. Me, me, me. I wonder, that's true, that's heat, and we bring a lot of trouble on ourselves by our selfishness, but I think that may be some of the thorny heart that's produced because of the heat that comes.

But, yeah, that can certainly be a source of heat and some of the byproduct of it that comes. We think about ourselves, number one. Good. What else? Okay, strained family relationships, whether it's with a spouse or children or extended family that need to know the Lord and those things are on rocky ground and it causes you trouble and anguish in your heart.

And rightly so, but the question then comes, how do I respond? That certainly brings heat. Good. What else? Death. Death of a loved one. The death of someone that you know.

[27 : 36] The prospect of death for yourself. That's a troubling thing when these things come into our life. That's heat. Good. There. Boy, you've got people that don't understand what you do or think and it just brings this weight of discouragement on your shoulders and sorrow and you're slandered.

People speak evil of you. That's a lot of heat. How are you going to respond? That's right. How will you respond? Is it going to puff you up with pride or are you going to give glory to God?

That's heat. And that's a good thing. You know, it's not all bad. What else? The culture around us. Yeah. It's a wicked world that we live in. Paul talks about temptation in this 1 Corinthians 10 passage.

That's heat. Good. Who else? Money. Yeah. Whether you've got a lot of it or a little of it. That's heat. Different kind of heat. But you've got a little and so you worry.

You've got a lot and so you're selfish and greedy and all of these things. Sure, there's a tough boss at work. There's chronic illness. There's a new career.

[28 : 43] A huge inheritance. I don't know if any of us are in danger of that. But there's growing old. There's something as simple as a traffic jam when you're trying to get somewhere in a hurry.

It's a rainy day when you were hoping for sun. You think about it in your life. And where you see thorns cropping up, you think what heat is producing them. So that's some of the heat.

But then the thorns. Help me identify some of the thorns that crop up in our lives when the heat comes. What are some of our sinful responses? What are some of the things that can come from all sorts of different kinds of heat?

But it seems to be at the root of a lot of our struggles. Right in the heart. Pride. Self. Worry. Oh boy. That's number one on a lot of our lists. It just swells up and we can't stop it it seems.

Jim. Anger. Okay. Good. Mike. Getting back. Revenge. Good. Jeanette. Yeah. They think somehow that we've gotten the short end of the stick and I do deserve better.

[29 : 55] I'm not like all these people that deserve this stuff. Dale. Okay. Yeah. We don't care. We say I give up or we pretend like the problem's not there.

Eileen. Bitterness. Wow. A root of bitterness in our heart. Steve. It is a concern. Discontent. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

We don't think we have what we want. That was the root of the Israelites problem. They weren't content with what God had given. It's this discontent that shows itself. In gratitude.

We're coming up on Thanksgiving here, aren't we? season when we think about giving thanks.

Well, that's good, but it should be for more than one day a year. It should be always. And difficulty comes and instead of thanking God for giving us grace in the midst of it, we fight against Him.

Depression. A cold heart. Distancing ourselves from God. Distancing ourselves from others. We don't want to have to deal with Him. And so there's all of these troubles.

[31 : 05] And our authors, and I think rightly, want to make certain that we don't blame our thorny behavior on our circumstances. That we don't blame it on the heat. And they say, Scripture makes it clear that these responses are not forced upon us by the pressures of the situation.

What I do comes from inside me. The things that happen to me will influence my responses, but never determine them. Rather, these responses flow out of thoughts and motives of my heart. And so that's why we laid all the groundwork we did back in the beginning. I think it was in the second chapter we talked about things people try to change. Things are going bad in their life and so change the circumstances.

If my spouse is the problem, I just get rid of them. If not enough money is the problem, then I get rich quick. Or I just use my credit card. They try to change their circumstances. They try to change the heat.

And what the authors aren't saying is that the heat is the source of our problems. It just causes what's in our hearts already to bubble up to the surface. And so when you look around at the heat, don't just try to get out of the heat.

[32 : 09] If there's a legitimate, biblical way of doing that, it's fine, but deal with the problem in your heart and the thorny behavior that comes. And the way we do that is through the cross. Never forget that Jesus is our Emmanuel.

God with us. Right now, child of God, as you sit there in these chairs, Christ is dwelling in you by His Spirit.

He is with you. Really and truly with you. Present in your life. He gives us everything we need to respond to life in godly ways.

The promise of the cross extends beyond renewed strength or enhanced wisdom. Christ gives us Himself and in so doing, remakes us from the inside out. If you're a believer, you're in the process of being remade to reflect the character of Jesus Himself.

And your Lord is employing every circumstance and relationship in your life to accomplish that goal. I think something that I've gathered as I've read this book is that I am not daily, hourly, regularly, consciously aware that Jesus is with me.

[33:24] I get in the middle of the situation and I go, what am I going to do? And I start either freaking out about it or making all my plans for how to deal with it. Totally forgetting that everything that I need to deal with that situation is dwelling in me right now.

We talked two weeks ago about being married to Christ. How He's our bride and how the fullness of God dwells in Him and He's dwelling in us. We have the Creator of the world dwelling in us.

We've got everything we need. And I think simply if we were more aware of that, it's not magical, there's not some magic way to get from thorns to fruit, but there is the cross.

And I wonder if we just don't think about Christ enough. We don't, when we wake up in the morning so discouraged that the load that's on our plate that we'll never be able to get to everything today and we just start the day that way instead of waking up and going, I'm a Christian.

The Holy Spirit is dwelling in me. Christ is in me. And He has everything that I need to get through this day and not just to get through it with thorns and anger and snapping at the kids and bitterness and being disgusted with my boss at work, but everything I need to get through this day producing good fruit to be responding rightly in these difficult situations and all of this heat.

[34:44] Everything I have or everything I need is already in me. Make that a challenge before your feet hit the floor in the morning to acknowledge God, His presence in your life, to thank Him for it and to pray that He would give you an awareness of it throughout your day so that when the trouble comes the first thing you think isn't, oh no, but I've got Jesus and how am I going to respond in this situation?

The thorns are by God's grace with fruit and Godly behavior. We need to be aware of it. What can we do? And let's help one another here. What can we do to keep Christ more before us?

More at the front of our minds instead of the last thing that we think of during trouble and trial. How can we do that? How can we keep Him at the center of our thoughts and in our hearts?

Billy. Okay. Christ is revealed to us in the Word of God. And so we start the day there soaking Him up so we've got something to take with us through the day.

Good. Somebody else was? Reading the Word. Good. Good. We start our day with the Word. At some point, we're in the Word during the day. Good. Kathy? Hmm.

[35:57] We can talk to this God. We can bring these things before Him. We don't just have to despair at the situation. We say, Lord, I'm being tempted to despair right now. Help me.

Give me grace. I know that you won't leave me or forsake me. We pray. We can talk to Him. It's amazing. The one who has all power, we can come to Him. So yeah, we pray.

Good. How else? Giving thanks in all things. Having that heart of gratitude at all times will remind us of the One who gives us these things.

And He gives us the heat sometimes too. Or He does. He is the One that gives us the heat that sends it into our lives. Good. What else? Dale? Being aware that in any situation our first thought is self.

Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. And learning to use that as that red flag is going to turn to self. Hmm. Hmm.

Hmm. Hmm. Excellent. This is an awareness of our self-centeredness.

[36:58] And yeah, as soon as we think of self, go, nope, I'm going to think of Christ first. Good. Dare. Hmm. Amen. Hmm. Amen. That's what we talked about last week.

We've got the body of Christ. And so encourage one another to focus on Christ. Hear how God has blessed this person and help them through their heat. and share your heat with them and then they'll be praying for you too and as you talk about these things, you don't just get on the phone and say, ah, life is so horrible.

I couldn't believe what's happened to me today. And if somebody calls you and says that, you say, without, it's hard to do it without sounding holier than thou and all of these things, but gently pointing back to Christ.

Share your own struggles. I had a similar day today. Similar struggles, but God was good to remind me of Christ. Bear one another's burdens together. Point each other to Christ. What else?

Good. Question yourself whether you're feeling the spiritual truth that you're good and the spiritual side. Okay? Yeah, is that spiritual fruit growing in me? Do I see it?

[38:03] Is there evidence of it? And be working on those things. We mentioned read the Bible, specifically read the Gospels and see Jesus there and see His love and compassion and His faithfulness to His disciples even when they were unfaithful and know that He is the same for you.

Good. Take these things and cling to Christ and His cross. When you're feasting on Christ, when you're full of Him and the sinful pleasures of the world begin to lose their attraction, you're full of Christ and so you don't desire anything else.

We've got Thanksgiving coming up and you're going to eat at Thanksgiving. And at Thanksgiving there's more choices and there's lots of different kinds of food and so even if you take a little bit of everything, you've still got more than you normally eat and you get done with Thanksgiving and you're full.

You don't even want to think about the pumpkin pie until you've watched a football game. And that's how we should be with Christ. We should be so full with what He has done for us that when these temptations to sin and to anger and bitterness come, they're not even attractive to us.

You can look at that pumpkin pie right after dinner and go, and that's what the world should do to us. It should repulse us because we're so taken with Christ.

[39:27] You're satisfied in Him. You won't seek satisfaction elsewhere. And so then there's this fruit that should come. It's going to involve repentance. I've got all these thorns here.

Lord, forgive me. I want to be done with the thorns and help me to turn my back on them and pursue holiness. So it's going to involve repentance, turning away from those things and following God in faith. Faith. And as the authors say, responding to the same old pressures in a brand new way.

When blessed, we look for ways to bless others. In trouble, we run to God and not away from Him. Emmanuel has entered your story and nothing will ever be the same. And so you see, am I producing this fruit of the Spirit of these things in my life?

So as we continue this study again, take an in-depth look at each of these four categories. That's what we'll do. And see how they apply in your life especially.

And that's why they wrote the book. Our prayer is that this book will help you identify areas where you need to grow as a person and in your relationship with the Lord. Our prayer is that this will provide a foundation for you to minister the same help to others.

[40:35] If this helps you, that's what they're aiming for. They want you to grow in grace, but they also want you to be a blessing to others. Go and share with them the glory of the cross and how it can bring you from this thorns to the fruit.

And then, Lord willing, over the next weeks, we'll break down each of these categories and by God's help and grace, see how we can change and become more like Him. We won't be doing that next week though.

Next week, Lord willing, I will not be here. And in this class, we'll be viewing a DVD that surveys God's mercies to us as a nation early on in our history. Use that as a catalyst for giving thanks to God.

We'll need to start that DVD right at 9.30, so if you'd be here right on time, even a shade early, that would be very helpful. We thank you for that. My family and I will miss being with you at our Thanksgiving service and next Sunday, but look forward to being with you when we get back. But may God help us to see our lives for what they are and to be clinging always to Christ and focusing on Him. We're dismissed.