

Desperation, Resignation - Part 5

by Keith Daniel

The sermon explores the various personal struggles known as 'thorns in the flesh' and emphasizes the importance of grace and reliance on God in overcoming them.

Duration: 9:14

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:7

Topics: "Spiritual Struggles", "Gods Grace"

Description

This sermon discusses the concept of 'thorns in the flesh' that individuals may face, whether physical setbacks, character flaws, or psychological challenges. It emphasizes the need to seek God's purpose in allowing these struggles in our lives, highlighting the importance of grace, humility, and reliance on God's strength to overcome these obstacles and grow in Christlikeness.

Transcript

And what does Boozy do? He takes off his hat, he throws it in the air, he jumps up and he says, Hallelujah! The devil still hates me! Phew! Now, that must have confused the devil. But brother, if somebody did that to me, I would die! I mean, I would just... They'd scream at me in the streets now, you know. What to one man is a thorn in the flesh is not to another man.

They're exactly opposite, he wouldn't understand, he wouldn't identify with how you're going through with that. You must remember that. I want to read something to you and I want you all to listen carefully, very carefully.

Our thorn in the flesh may be so different to other people. Now, what is your thorn in the flesh? Will you listen, every one of you, and let God point to you why he's allowed things in your life. As different it is to others who might not understand.

To some people, the thorn in the flesh is physical. You've been given some physical setback or sickness, a handicap that you must bear all your life, but God allowed it. It slows you down, it drives you to despair.

But you cannot understand why God doesn't heal us, why God doesn't heal us. You can't be what you want to be for God, what you want to do for God. You're so conscious.

To some people, the thorn in the flesh is physical. You've been given some setback and a handicap that you must bear physically all your life, it seems. To others, the thorn in the flesh is something about your

character.

That you become conscious is a deep setback in your life, where people misunderstand you because of this in your character. They misunderstand you constantly. You know, we have in our mission, which is probably the oldest missionary society in Africa, one of the oldest in the world, to survive when other missions collapse.

Our mission has been there many, many years. It's had many godly people. When I was a young missionary in Africa, our leader, he had been 50, I think, 55 years in full-time service for God, just burning his life up for souls, and his wife.

He had been a leader in this mission for many years, respected, revered, but he was now old. And they had this big farewell, you know, in a great hall. And the missionaries and the fruit of the mission came in their throngs to hear them speak.

And they let his wife speak. She was allowed to get up and share a testimony at this farewell, as she was saying goodbye and withdrawing now from full-time capacity and leadership over this mission. And she testified something that staggered that congregation to the death of their soul, this godly woman.

She testified. She said, None of you have known. I have had in my character something that has kept me in the dust all through the years, every day.

People were scared of me, but as I had more and more leadership, because my husband was an authority, the ladies had to be dealt with. If something went wrong with the lady missionary workers all over South Africa and Africa, it was my responsibility to confront them. And I didn't want to, but I had to.

My husband didn't go to a lady to tell her I was the one as the leader's wife. And oftentimes I had to, but there's something about my character that people were offended at. I became conscious of it.

It seemed like I was angry. And people became fearful of me. I couldn't get over this.

This began to really stagger me that people were so wounded by the way I spoke. I didn't mean it intentionally as sinfulness. And I began to weep before God when I realized the hurt and the shock.

And she said, I came before God one day and I said to him, I wish, God, that thou wouldst make me like this Ethelbert Smith. Ethelbert Smith was one of the greatest preachers in the history of South Africa. He was probably the most loved man in our country's history, apart from Andrew Murray himself, who turned our whole nation to seek God when he was alive.

Ethelbert Smith, she said, I would like to be like him. He never gets angry, no matter what people do wrong. As a leader, he's just so gently.

There's no anger. There's no harshness in his, no strength in his words. He's just love, you know.

When people fail, what does Ethelbert Smith do? He goes and puts his arms around them. When another man wants to get angry, he always weeps with them, you know. Try and look for anything to encourage them with, you know.

He really was an amazing person. Nothing made him angry. He was the gentlest.

And then God said to me one day on my knees, when I was weeping, please God, if he can be like that, I want you to make me like it. And God said to her, in her heart, Ethelbert Smith was born like that. He didn't acquire that through going through with God.

Some people are born with a gentle character. Isn't that the work of grace? He just happened to be born like that. That's his whole character.

You are like your mother. Do you remember? And she thought about it. You're not full of sin.

You've got your mother's character. She was like that. When your mother said jump, everybody jumped.

Just the way she said it. Now you've got your mother's character. It's not that you're sinning against me and that.

And then God said to me, but in spite of this in your life, I can still bring grace. I can give you all the grace to make you Christlike as you stay in the dust. Because of this thing.

Something great can come out of it. She said, you know, I was in the dust daily. I went down before God.

And I would groan before God. I would cling to God. As very few people might ever need to.

So that I had the grace to walk out and not react as my character naturally wanted me to. And would just react without sinfulness in my heart. I had to stay down at the cross daily through the years.

As very few people conscious of my desperate need for God to keep me quiet. To hold my lips. And to give me somehow wisdom to know what to say in spite of my having to be a leader that wouldn't wound.

It kept me in the dust. This thing God left in me. Some people, the thorn in the flesh is physical.

To others, the thorn in the flesh is something about your character. That you become conscious is a deep setback where people misunderstand you constantly. But God doesn't take it out of your life.

It's not sin. It isn't as if it's going to be refined by the blood. But controlled by the Holy Spirit because you need grace.

And God gives grace to those who know they need it. It kept you down. It kept you careful to make sure you draw strength.

To others, the thorn in the flesh is psychological. You could have a deeply negative character. A hypersensitive spirit that the devil aims at always to stagger you through insensitive, harsh, and cruel people.

I'd like to repeat that. To some, the thorn in the flesh is psychological. You could have a deeply negative character.

A hypersensitive spirit that the devil plays chaos with you. He aims at always just knowing what to do. He's got enough insensitive people in the church, let me tell you.

He just knows what to do to set them off. Through insensitive, harsh, and cruel people, the devil is staggering you. But have you noticed something about such people? I'll tell you.

Pick up their Bibles, and you'll know immediately, if you want to know the mind of Christ, why God didn't just take it out of their hearts that they're not insensitive anymore. These people, they survive by the Word of God. Every page, it's almost like you can see the tears.

Seeking for God to comfort, to heal the wounds daily. They devour the Scripture. They identify with every promise.

The dates are there. The marks. What God promised concerning the hurts, concerning the people that were hurting them.

They had drawn near to God in a way no one would ever draw near to.

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