



THE CHURCH AT ELLERSLIE
SUNDAY SERMON NOTES

ERIC LUDY

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2015

THE LAND OF THORNS

A Study in the Proper Appropriation of Bodily Suffering



Then to Adam He said . . . Cursed is the ground for your sake . . . Both thorns and thistles
it shall bring forth for you . . .

Genesis 3:17-18

The Much-Heated Divine Healing Debate

Heeding the Warning from our Forefathers

Erroneous teaching on faith-healing does much harm, misleading some as to the
purposes of God, shaking the faith of others, and distressing the minds of many.

Hudson Taylor

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of
the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not
know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up
to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do
not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible
words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I
will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a
fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what
he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the
abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan
to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the
Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient
for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather
boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take

pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Paul's Thorn

- lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me
- a messenger of Satan
- to buffet me
- lest I be exalted above measure

Skolops - Sko'-lops

A Thorn; A pointed piece of wood, a pale, a sharp stake, a splinter. This word can technically mean anything pointed. Paul uses this word indicating a tool of Satan wielded against him to buffet him. He calls it a "skolops in the flesh (body)", indicating something that greatly affected him in his physical being, that tried him in his body, possibly through bodily pain and the humiliation that came from whatever his physical ailment he may have been suffering from.

The Confusion over Thorns

An Exercise in Biblical Thinking and Reasoning

- A Thorn is from the Devil - it's a messenger of Satan - it's an operation of the Power of Sin
- God Hates Sin
- God Has Defeated Sin
- Sin Has No Power over the Believer
- God is Not Subject to Sin, nor are those who are IN Him Subject to its Power
- Yay!

The Strange Injection into our Cheery Biblical Thoughts

- But though God proved victorious on the Cross, He has left His Children in a World Still Under Sin's Control
- And He has left them in Bodies Still Subject to the Old Laws of Decay and Death
- Hmmm

And Then It Gets Even More Strange

- And When We Look Heavenward to ask "Why, Dear Lord, does this bodily weakness and human frailty remain?" - we see that He is not in the least bit moved with concern over this fact. He's not apologizing as if to indicate that this current bodily weakness that we find ourselves in was some bizarre oversight on His part.
- In fact, He seems to be pleased to have us here on this darkened globe in these old bodies. Furthermore, He indicates in His Word that it is through this strange "Old World" set-up that He intends to work out our salvation, to exercise our faith unto maturity, and to reveal the person of Jesus Christ for all the world to see. Get this. He has purposely rescued us this way.
- He has purposely left us in the Land of Thorns, that we might in and through suffering prove a genuine faith, reveal the Glory of Jesus Christ, and show forth unto the heavenly realms the manifold wisdom of God. He's not shocked that we are in the Land of Thorns. He wants us here. He has us here on purpose - even knowing full well that His children will suffer greatly due to this fact. He has us here on purpose, and He has a gigantic smile of confidence on His Almighty face.
- Wowzer

Now Let Me Get This Straight . . .

We are Christians, Seated in Heavenly Places, Secured IN Christ Jesus

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Luke 10:19

They (those that believe on Him) will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Mark 16:18

But he (Paul) shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

Acts 28:5

BUT, we are still in Old Bodies on an Old Dying Earth, which means . . .

- Our Life's Circumstances are still Vulnerable to **Practical Thorns**
- Our Bodies are still Vulnerable to **Physical Thorns**
- Our Hearts and Minds Still are subject to the Buffeting of **Verbal Thorns**

And Get This . . .

God Wants it this Way . . . *For Now*

This is Our Assignment - to Walk Through this Land of Thorns for the stretch of Time We have been Assigned - triumphantly. Will we endure Thorns? Absolutely. Will Thorns at Times appear to have hindered us or nullified our call? Most Certainly. But can the Thorns of Satan hinder the Calling of God upon our Lives? Not on your life! In fact, it is these very Thorns that God has chosen to use as His primary means of showing forth His power, His strength, and His Glory through us His children.

Thorns are Not From God, BUT Thorns are Used by God

God Takes All Things the Enemy Means for Evil and Turns it to Good

He works all things for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

The Big Meanie's Manure

Introducing "The Special Trampoline Boots"

So, How Should We Respond to the Thorns in our Lives?

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

In every thing give thanks:

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Thorn Arrives

- Give thanks, Leap for Joy, Exercise the Grace Given, Get Excited for what God will do in and through it
- Hit it in the Teeth, Resist it, Fight it, Reject it

The Thorn Persists

- Give thanks, Leap for Joy, Exercise the Grace Given, Get Excited for what God will do in and through it
- Keep Resisting, Keep hitting, Keep standing in agreement with God's purposes

The Thorn Persists

- Give thanks, Leap for Joy, Exercise the Grace Given, Get Excited for what God will do in and through it
- Keep Resisting, Keep hitting, Keep standing in agreement with God's purposes - God is not suddenly in the business of Thorns, you still can be certain of the origin of this Thorn and the fact that God is a Remover of Thorns - so continue to resist it

The Thorn Persists

- Make a declaration to the Heavenly Realms. You will maintain your position in opposition to the Devil's movement against your life, but the grace of Jesus Christ is abundantly available for endurance in and through this challenge.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you all the many benefits that have come forth into your life in and through this Thorn Resistance and Thorn Endurance.
- Praise God for His Faithfulness and even for this Thorn, for without it you would never have grown as you have - it truly has proven to be a gift - but it wasn't really the Thorn that was the gift, but rather, the grace that was supplied in response was the true gift.

Option #1 - The Thorn Persists, Even Unto Death

- Unto your dying breath, praise the God who converts this time in the Land of Thorns into Triumph and Glory. For He has won the victory, and even in death, we find that the Thorn has only worked to make us stronger and lead us into the Presence of Christ.

Option #2 - The Thorn is Removed, Unto the Praise and Glory of Jesus Christ

- It's gone. Jesus the Healer, the Redeemer, the Provider has supplied the specific virtue. Now you know that Thorns never win, they only point you to the One who has already won. Every Thorn that comes is merely a gigantic opportunity through which the Grace of God can flood into our lives. More Thorns will come, so arm yourself to suffer in this Body and get into position to Leap for Joy. This Thorn was removed, but the next one could be unto Death - this Thorn was removed because God still has work for you to do here on this Earth, but one day, a Thorn may come that is unto Death - don't fear it, dear Child! Die well. Suffer your thorns with the Grace I supply!

The Man of Smashed Head

The Thorn that Persisted

The Man of No Head

The Thorn unto Death that was Removed

The Man of Bitten Hand

The Thorn that proved the Divine Authority and Mission of the Apostle Paul unto the Savages

The Triumphant Mindset of the Believer

I WILL Accomplish My Purpose Here on Earth

No Thorn Can Stop Me! To Live is Christ!

I WILL Eventually Come to My Last Day and Finish this Race

Introducing a Big Word

Sovereignty

The fact that God is over all, in charge of all, in control of all, and all things will ultimately turn for His glory and for the good of those who love Him

The Idea of Sovereignty Gone Sour

It's known as Passivity

God is Sovereign, so therefore, I don't need to do anything

The Fact of Sovereignty Understood Correctly

It's known as Christianity

*God is Sovereign, so therefore, I give thanks knowing
He has a means for my salvation in every circumstance,
and whatever the enemy means for evil He will always turn to good.*

For God So Loved the World . . .

That He Sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, to the Land of Thorns to Empty Thorns of their Power to Harm us

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Luke 10:19

We can now walk on Thorns, be tried by Thorns, be mentally buffeted by Thorns, even be pierced by Thorns, and even die due to the bludgeoning of Thorns - but these Thorns cannot hurt us. But rather, these Thorns are being used by God to build us, strengthen us, and refine us. We can thank God for Thorns.

So, What About Healing?

God ALWAYS Heals - for He is Jehovah Rapha

He is the Thorn Burner, The Thorn Remover, The Thorn Converter

The Heavenly Principle: His Ways are Higher than Our Ways

A Young Faith vs. A Matured Faith

- A Young Faith says . . .

God will do it . . . this particular way

- A Matured Faith says . . .

God will do it . . . His way

The Boat Filling up with Water

- A Young Faith often genuinely believes that suffering is bad, and death to be avoided at all costs
- A Matured Faith genuinely believes suffering to be good and death to be actual gain and victory
- A Young Faith prays to avoid hardship, trial, imprisonment, persecution, and death - and it does this with genuine love and care, but a love and a care that is still very ignorant
- A Matured Faith prays for God to supply grace in hardship, triumph through sufferings, the sweet aroma of His presence in difficulty, and that a magnificent glory would usher forth out of the circumstances

The Thorn Remover Always Wins

- Every Thorn will prove to be under His Power and Control
- Every Thorn will prove to only have brought about Life in and through the Man and Woman of Faith
- Every Thorn will be removed, some prior to death and some by death
- Every Thorn will bend its knee and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of the Father

So, How Should we Pray?

- We Pray Fervently That Every Thorn Be Removed. And with full confidence we keep asking, and asking, and asking, for we have full confidence that He will indeed remove every Thorn
- And we Submit to the Undeniable Fact that God knows better than we do how to leverage the benefits of the Thorn in our lives
- We Ask That God Receive His Full Due and that the Maximum possible Glory would be revealed in and through this Thorn

No More Fear of the Bully Thorn

The Truth will set you free!

How Are We To Appropriate Thorns?

We are grieved by many trials . . . *and yet* . . . We greatly rejoice, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:6-8)

We are reviled, persecuted, and falsely accused . . . *and yet* . . . Blessed are we, let us rejoice and be exceeding glad (Matthew 5:11-12)

We are partakers of Christ's sufferings . . . *and yet* . . . we may be glad with exceeding joy (1 Peter 4:12-13)

We are enduring tribulations . . . *and yet* . . . we are exceeding joyful (2 Corinthians 7:4)

We face trials and testings . . . *and yet* . . . we count it all joy (James 1:2-4)

Paul's Thorn Revisited

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

The Many Forms of Satan's Thorns

In Infirmities

Upon the Body

In Needs

Upon the Finances

In Reproaches, In Persecutions

Upon the Thoughts

Upon the Reputation

Upon the Relationships

In Distresses

Upon the Circumstances

Paul's Bewildering Statement about His own Bodily Suffering

- God's Grace IS Sufficient for this Thorn
- His Strength is Made Perfect in the Weakness that this Thorn is preying upon

- Paul gladly boasted in his Thorn because it was the avenue through which the Power of Christ rested upon him
- Paul took pleasure in whatever form the Thorn might take - he applied the Thorn Lesson to every Thorn he might ever face. Maybe we should do the same?

I Realize You Are Probably Quite Excited to Receive your Next Thorn

You will not need to request Thorns of God, for He doesn't bring them. Rather, you live in a world full of Thorns. Therefore, you will have no shortage of opportunity to realize this great grace in Christ Jesus.