

SEEING GOD'S GRACE IN THE THORNS

1/4/20

- * Today -- I have the opportunity to give a sermon
 - * Purpose of this sermon -- "Seeing God's grace in the Thorns"
 - * A version of this sermon was given on 5/16/15
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* Let's begin by asking a few questions --

- * Does the Bible really say that people should be happy in trials?
 - * Isn't that approach encouraging people to avoid reality?
 - * Isn't that approach encouraging people to become lost in denial?
 - * Isn't that approach really some sort of religious voodoo?
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- * Is it possible to be happy in trials?
 - * Is it psychologically healthy to be happy in trials?
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James 1:2 my brethren -- count it all joy, when you fall
 into various trials
 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces
 patience
 4 let patience have its perfect work -- that you
 may be perfect and complete -- lacking
 nothing
1 Pet. 1:6 greatly rejoice -- though you have been grieved by
 various trials
 7 that the genuineness of your faith may be found to
 praise, honor and glory at the revelation
 of Jesus Christ

 * being much more precious than gold
 * tested by fire

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* At this time, I want to read an excerpt from an article that my brother wrote for the "Edifying the Body" section of our website for the weekend of May 9, 2015 -- The article was titled "A Meaningful Life"

* Our stepfather had died on April 30, 2015 and the funeral was on May 4, 2015 -- I was the host who directed the details at the funeral and my brother was the main speaker -- The article summarized many of the points that my brother made in his

presentation

- * Title of article -- "A Meaningful Life"
- * Subhead of the paragraph -- "God's grace is always sufficient"

One would think a successful life is one without hardship, but that is not true. In a sense, life is like the stem of a rose. On one end is a beautiful fragrant flower. But that flower is supported by a stem that has thorns.

During the good times, it is easy to praise God and accept His grace. These are the times when our prayers are answered the way we want, the bank account is full and we are experiencing total satisfaction.

But how do we accept God's grace when it comes to us as a thorn?

God gave the apostle Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting himself. Jesus spoke directly to Paul and stated, "My grace is sufficient to you" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Jesus specifically said the thorn was God's grace!

My father accepted the flowers and thorns of God's grace. Around the age of 10, he and his brother were placed into foster care. This occurred because of a divorce and remarriage. During the formative years, my dad never saw his mother again, and he was visited by his father only once a month.

But, what is most remarkable, no one ever heard my father express a word of bitterness or resentment toward his father or stepmother. It is thorns like this that cause us to be perfected in Christ. . . .If our lives are to be successful, we must remember God's grace (even though it may be given to us as flowers or thorns) is always sufficient.

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1. God created you to have mental discipline and to have emotional maturity

Gen. 50:20 finding the good
 * God directly meant it for good
 * God created you with the capacity to
 find the good in circumstances

Phil. 4:8 dwell on positive
 11-13 dealing with reality

2. God will send help to you

Matt. 26:38-39 sorrowful unto death
Luke 22:43 an angel appeared unto Christ
2 Tim. 1:16-18 Onesiphorus appeared unto Paul