

How to Live With Difficult People

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon teaches that living with difficult people requires a good disposition, submission, and obedience to God's will, and that suffering can be redemptive and purifying if we approach it with the right attitude.

Duration: 29:18

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:18

Topics: "Difficult People"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of suffering for the sake of Christ. He explains that even if someone is innocent, if they endure suffering without complaining or seeking revenge, there is eternal value in it. The preacher also discusses the attitudes Christians should have towards physical people, emphasizing the need to submit to others and to respond with kindness and goodness, even when mistreated. He concludes by highlighting the merit and reward that comes from enduring suffering and mistreatment with a Christ-like attitude.

Transcript

We're still in 2 Peter, the 2nd chapter, and we're beginning with verse 18. And I'd like you to take out your Bible and read it. And then I'm going to read it to you in the famous Phillips translation.

A book, incidentally, you ought to own, that is, for young churches, and that is very widely known and very much loved, and even in the best fundamental churches. Now, from verse 18 to verse 25. And here's what Peter said in the language.

He said, you who are certain, should commit yourselves not only to the good in time, but also to the good in self. A man does something valuable when he endures it in a state of thought. There will always be suffering and death.

It is no credit to you, if you are in a punishment, which you have lived to deserve. But if you do your duty and are kind towards, and consider self-repayment, then you live in cause of your cause. For Christ suffered for you, and left you a perfect example, to follow in his steps.

He was worthy of no sin, or of a slight disregard for you. Yet he offered no results in return, making all threats his revenge. He simply committed himself to the one good.

And he certainly bore out things that should be my regret. You must be ready to suffer for all that is good, from your soul. Now, we have been dealing with the Christian attitude.

The attitude toward the government, the attitude toward all spirit things, toward mankind, particularly toward God. Now, I'm going to deal with our attitude toward busy-gov people. If I were giving myself a name, I would call it, how to live with busy-gov people.

Here, in effect, in your particular social system, there are masses, all around you, that when you as a Christian, you know that no man's birth, and no man is determined by birth. You as a Christian know that things are all blood. And there isn't any such thing as aristocratic blood.

All that's in the loose. Nobody has inherited blue blood. That's in the loose.

We Christians know that. We know that all men seek tongues before God. We know that the son of a black slave from Africa can become a butcher to be worshiped.

The son of an aristocrat from Boston can become a murderer. We know that men are men, fair and godless, of the sort of jacket into which they are born. Now, if you say, Peter, in effect, you know that.

You are not called, however, to be a revolution. Neither political nor social. You are not called to institute a revolution and upset the social and political movement.

You are called, rather, to adapt yourself to your political and social environment so that your home is in heaven and your home may just appear as exile for you. Therefore, you as a Christian are called to interfere with politics and try to put into practice the pie you entertain as a Christian, but which you know will never be put into effect as we do not violate the will of God nor do we do anything that's wrong. When we do, it's a mess.

Obey them and let it be. Everybody knows there's nobody born and everyone knows there is no one known. We are what we are.

Masters of servants. And there will be some, those that they command and inherit, who have to serve and others who have to give orders. We do give orders.

We call it employer and employee. Then they call it master and servant. And I'll say, Peter, just as your attitude is here, your attitude towards kings is to be honest, your attitude towards all men is to be honest, and your attitude towards your employer, which the master, is to be obedient, to be honest, and just to be that way, acting like a Christian, not only to those that are easy to live with, but to the poor.

And so we deal with monasteries with a Christian's attitude towards the poor. Now the word poor here, isn't the word that's used in our time. Nobody means poor.

Did you learn anything from that? There's a method in the Church where you can strip you of your age-arrived vows and say a lot's been added by the Church, and know that we don't drive the Church away. Poor is the wrong way back down. But what kind of poor person is it you've got to live? Either if he's your employer, or if he's in the home, or if you're forced to live.

Now, we must not only learn to live with a poor person, but we must learn even to forgive him. Now that ugly, harsh word poor represents that number, that group of people that don't know what to do. It is a Greek word that has no English equivalent.

Poor represents a camp. And way back 350 years ago, 340 years ago, poor meant what they meant, what the Greek word meant. But it isn't what it means now.

So I suggest to look up 12 different translations and see how they handle this word poor. I want to embellish those over you. Not only to the good in kind, but also to the difficult.

That's in the Philips translation. One says, not only to the good in kind, but also to the hard to do. Another one says, poor, to bad women.

Another one says, ill-tempered. Another one says, cross. Another one says, unreasonable.

Another says, and then my good, very thoughtful judgment says, that you are to submit yourself to the power. And then we have another translation. There's a poor, another says, overbearing, and another says, unfair.

That's the truth, what a man would look like if he had packed into one personality all these adjectives. Any man who is unfair, cruel, calm, fair, arbitrary, unreasonable, bad, ill-tempered, cross, fairly hard to please, and difficult, well, brother, he's been good to me. And if he wasn't, well, so I don't think of any one man.

Any one of these is enough, brother. Any one. In other words, the word such a bad disposition.

And the Holy Ghost says, you servants, be subject to your masters with awe. Not only to the goodly gentle, but also to those of bad disposition. It's important to repeat here what I've said many times, that a bad disposition is worse than any of the dramatic, so-called, great sins that we hear about.

And you don't, nobody goes to jail in this position. Usually doesn't get killed for it. And there's nothing terrible about it.

And you never see a great headline on what's terrible this morning. It just doesn't get dramatized. And so, we've kicked out these great sins, of a great sin.

And when our Lord was on earth, he didn't have his trouble with the murderers, the revolutionists. He had his trouble with men of bad disposition, religious people who were difficult, bad-humored, ill-tempered, contrary, overbearing, and unfair. And I would say that a bad disposition causes more than any other evil in the world.

Take that man who drinks. Many a man drinks and when he's inebriated, which means drunk. He may be a bit hard to live with.

But all losers, when they come out of that, are kind fellows. I know a lot of them. And they're often decent fellows when they're sober.

And some of them, even when they're, they're a nice fellow. Take a certain slave when he's inebriated and he wants to get nasty. I don't drink in spite of all the play I can get.

I don't think it causes as much, as much woman suffering as bad disposition causes. There are women that have a husband who comes home drunk. There are one hundred and fifty or two hundred women who will never get up sober.

And a sober woman over this great meeting in the morning will learn more suffering than if once in a while he came home drunk. And you may not agree with me on that. And if you don't, certainly, it isn't the truth.

But that's my opinion. Because I've never, up to now, suffered from any bodily injury. But, oh, brother, how I've been lacerated by serf people.

By business-type people. I've been caught because of pressures on heart and not body. In the old times, maybe they did it still in England, for executing a man, hanging him to a rule.

There was, the executioner would come up to the woman, ask forgiveness. And say, I am deeply sorry for what the law has done. And he would put this thing all out of that which he was about to do.

So that it was hardly where a man went mad to the gallows. For cursing is execution. You might have cursed the king with a quote, curse is execution.

Because the executioner took the goodness out of it by a humble, honest apology for having to do what he was about to do. So that the kind words from the man who was about to take your head off would take a lot of sting out of the problem. But when the executioner works on your heart and your nerve and your mind and works continually every day and next week and next month and next year and the year after that and never stops and never quite for the next but always elacerates and hurts and stings.

And you know when you walk into a nerve present or your cousins it's like biting, tickling, stinging, tapping, taping. And I say there's more curse than there is. There's a heart I imagine clubs were invented for that, but I know that you can get away from these if you can.

Some of you smile a kind of a tender smile and say to yourself, old boy, when the whistle blows, I'm glad to get out of that office. I'm glad to get out of an icy wind. Walking out there, there are friendly policemen and people who won't push you over.

But the fellow in the office means it. He's got a terrible disposition and he'll or lacerate. So I say most of you will get away from it if you can, but you know sometimes you just can't.

You have to live with it. And living with it all the time, living your wits, recurring constantly day after day, in your home or in the attendance chamber, for Christ's sake, you must. Brothers, the big job then is to learn how to live with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of God's power. Now, I'll briefly outline here for you as I go. It explains how it's good.

May God help me, the preacher, to learn quickly, and you, the listener, also to learn. Verse 19. That there is eternal value in this kind of suffering.

If you are not innocent, then all the punishments you get, just you get, get, and you'll never get any other reward for it. They say now they're acting like a Christian. And you're not to blame.

And yet, and still, these bad rumors keep you got, so the people insist upon making your life a hell. But you can take eternal value in it. You're doing something worthwhile, says Joseph.

The same quote he says. Now, verse 20 says, that there's no value at all in it if we're to blame for it. ...has brought the fire of his employer, or the fire of her husband, or of her wife, or of her body.

They've brought a fire and a grief, but they're to blame for it, and they're only getting what's coming to them. Peter says that no more than the day of Christ. Because God's scales are always down, and if I act mean, and get treated meanly, why, it is an eye for an eye, and a foot for a foot, and a hand for a hand, and a tooth for a tooth, and I won't be getting what I deserve.

But if I decently and get abused in return, then I have an overflowing profit there, and that profit is merit in the days to come, not me, but merit for my son, if any. Then he says, verses 21 to 23, that way, but I think I ought to add this word here, that Peter seems to indicate here, that if you are living people, and they're making your life hard to live, and you're grumbling about it, you're not going to get any reward either. A grumbling saint is a crownless saint.

You're going to have to be uncomplaining. I've been treated mean, terribly, abused with mean. Sometimes I lose my temper and tell them off.

This is the moment you lose your temper, and your golden crown goes down the drain. It's melted up and gone, because God never rewards anybody for anything that they grumble and they do. I have sometimes done things that I didn't want to do, and knew that I was rewarded for doing it.

I was under pressure. I didn't want to do it, and I pitied myself and felt I was being mistreated, but I went and did it, but there's no reward for that. I have too much realism in me to expect the Lord to coddle me.

God isn't coddling poor saints, so that if you grumble about it, you lose it. Then, verse 21 and 23, the Prophet Christ went this very way. So the rule is, if you are doing right and suffering for it, then you're right for it.

And the rule is, never follow any footprints unless there's blood in them, because they are leading in all directions from where you are, and you can take any one of them if you want to. Always look for blood in the footprints, and then follow them, for they are made by the man of power who is appointed with these. Christ went that way, and if you go there, you'll be going the way of Christ.

And Christ never fought back. Therefore, the rule is, never fight back, because if you fight back, you lose all the benefits. But the Scriptures say, only God, and he will understand, and he'll reward.

Verse 24, suffering can be healed, for it's suffered redemptively. And you can't suffer redemptively. Do you know why? You can't suffer redemptively, for redemption has already been suffered.

Our Lord on the cross, once for all, suffered redemptively, and gave himself redemption, and said, It's finished! And God wrote a period after the book of redemption, so that there's no more redeeming to be done. Jesus Christ was redemptive suffering. Your sufferings cannot be redemptive sufferings.

They don't need to be. ...be profitable to you and to others. You suffer for the Lord Jesus' sake, from the early and early found, of a poor old woman, that is a dead man, a hard-to-see woman, that's surely despised in the church, and you're forced to be up against.

You can turn that into glory. Three different things. First of all, you can glorify God in it.

You can shame that devil. For the devil is ashamed when he sees a Christian being abused, and he doesn't abuse him back again. When he sees it in a thoroughly way, and he doesn't recline a thoroughly fat man, the devil is ashamed, and God will glorify him.

Second thing that this will do for us, if we learn to live with difficult people patiently, is to purify us. We all need to be purified. And suffering is one of God's cases.

And suffering is never pleasant. They say that it's never been discovered a convenient place to have a... No matter where you have been, it's always the wrong place. And there never has been discovered any suffering yet that was pleasant.

Even if it was pleasant, it wouldn't be suffering. It's harsh and grimy and ugly and... It's sand, papers, and teeth, and yet it purifies things. Therefore, if you see how we treat the devil, how we spoil him and rob him, the devil is getting away with some difficult, horrible thing.

And to this day of your life, you can't get away. And God says, no, I'm not going to change that any. I'm going to leave the devil's pattern the same.

And then I'm going to let that poor person to become a buffer, to buff my child and make him shine. I'm going to let the poor, poorly companion become a bitter medicine to heal my beloved. For my good fellow man, it could be that you or your wife think you can't... It could be that that ugly disposition of yours is making that crown on your husband's head to shine.

It could be that that ugly, sturdy boss you work for, a God-almighty agent, can't use the Lord to polish you and keep your mouth shut and obey so you'll know what to do when you get married later on. Now the matter of purifying everybody, purifying people. I hesitate to speak along with difficult people because I'm afraid that the pill would wag the dog.

And I'm afraid that that pill would boomerang on me. And I have no doubt that some of you smiling people, smiling inside, are saying, Oh boy, how you need that. I don't hesitate to feel self-conscious because I object.

This means him. The fact is, he's no good to me at all, all I mean is, he's probably too easy to live with. We've been together so long and never had one bit of trouble yet.

If I ever got pertained to it. So the result is, we never had even the hot word never in ten years. So he's no good to me that way, you see.

But I have had, they're really good to me, they help to polish me. Our district superintendent sits over here and somebody will say, I suppose that's mechanism? Pull up against the district office. In all the years our brother's been here, we've never ever had a, never anything.

He's asked me to be more done it. And he's no good to me either. So with my two close brethren here, one who's associated with me, they're a pure officer, they're no good to me because they don't purify me.

But in the long run, the Lord gives himself people long. Shall I share with you a letter I got last week? Well, a lady wrote me from the beautiful sunrises of Boston and Raleigh. And she said, Dear Mr. Silver, I heard you was out last summer.

And I came up to you after your first sermon and said, I heard so many, I think hundreds of you preached tonight. And you said, I hope you were not disappointed. And I, with my two sudden talks, said no, I was no, I lied.

And she said, I've had that on the conscience ever since. And I'm writing this. I've been getting such nice letters from people now that I'm giving up the weekly.

They're writing me such nice letters. But she's way down there and I'm moving in and out. And you have to as a layman.

You as a salesman are a breakman. They can taper us in policy. But don't run away any more than you have to.

As soon as you complain, you simply break this power off. As soon as you're all a breakman, you're not breakers anymore. And as soon as you don't restrict me, I will keep talking to you and polishing your crown.

Thirdly, this suffering. You can't suffer in redemption, but you can suffer to win men to the Lord. I called yesterday a dear little lady, Ruby Adrian.

The earth's begun to pull her down now. And come home, tilted, from chin down. Only praying, only praying for him would pull those dirty, filthy clothes off of him that he must be put into bed.

And finally saw him gloriously converted to Jesus Christ. And he went over his back and I am so happy as God be my doctor and you be my savior. But it took a woman who was so and so spiritual that she could perform that offensive task over and over again in him.

Now if she had done it, and then turned him awry as soon as he came out of his junk and never would have been converted, never would have believed in it, she shut her little mouth shut. She prayed and she prayed with delight. And the result was that great big German man just couldn't take that kind of self-righteousness.

And learned to live with difficulties that people understand. She can keep sweet about, she don't complain. The result will be that we'll leave a flavor and fragrance kindling at the table.

She suffered for us and to whom we have now returned.

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