

The Seasons Of Life

by Dan Young

This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and maturity, highlighting the need to press on in faith, overcome trials, and not be complacent in one's walk with God. It discusses the necessity of suffering in the flesh to cease from sin, the value of knowing Christ above all else, and the continual journey of deepening one's relationship with the Lord despite changing seasons and challenges.

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Scripture: Philippians 3:14, Romans 6:4, 1 Peter 4:1, Philippians 3:8, Philippians 3:12, Philippians 3:13, Philippians 3:15, Philippians 3:16, Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 4:16

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Description

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Transcript

It's prayers on you, Lord, because you care for us. I just pray that you would lift our hearts to thee. You would convict us, change us, and challenge us, and implore us to keep moving forward with you, Jesus.

We thank you for all that you do for us, for the week, for the strength you gave us. You gave us where we fall short. And thank you for the small victories you did give us, Lord.

Pray you'd unite us together. Don't let the devil bring division. In the name of Jesus, I pray those things will be torn down.

I pray the minds of the unbelieving will be open, Lord. You'd open our ears, our hearts, and our eyes to see the glorious truths in your word, Lord, that we might be able to receive them with humility, and our hearts can change. In Jesus' name, amen.

You know, there's different seasons in our life. There's different seasons throughout the year, but the Lord changes our seasons so that we wouldn't depend on ourselves, but that we would always be dependent on him. And many times those seasons change.

They're usually a trial, something that comes into our life that we hadn't seen before, so it's new to us. And this is where our faith gets tested. So a lot of the time we're comfortable in the position that we're at, but then he brings a new season into our life so that we have to really rely upon him.

It says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. But the Lord, it's his way for us to grow in faith is to cause us to go into a new season, a new trial, a new test for us to grow. If we don't pass that test, praise God, he will bring that test full circle until we do get the victory in those areas.

But many times he's using it to challenge us, to cause us to grow, to be needy on him and needy for him. Especially as a young person, we think that the Lord doesn't care, the Lord is in control of our lives. And we have to remember that, that there's a time for everything.

There's a season in our life. And when those seasons change, that we need to lift our hands to the Lord and say, Lord, your will be done, not my own. Help me to learn the lesson that you're trying to teach me in this circumstance.

And if we pass one test, praise God, he's able to exalt us to the next test. And we can't remain stagnant. I love the verse that Paul says.

He says in Philippians, I'll read it to you here. Philippians chapter three. Paul says this in Philippians chapter three, verse four.

It says, although I myself might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more. I was circumcised on the eighth day. I was of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

As to the law, he was a Pharisee. And as to zeal for God, he was a persecutor of the church. And as to the righteousness which is in the law, he found himself to be blameless.

And this is when he was not born again. This is when he was living according to the law. He was a good person outwardly.

He knew nothing against himself. And this is the greatest danger that we can have is that we can be good outwardly. Maybe the Lord has saved us from a place of depravity, of sin, of wickedness.

And now he's bringing us into a good land. He's changing us. And then we don't know anything else.

And we think, well, this is, I'm a good person now. I'm not doing the things that I once done. And we stand still and we just stay in the same place.

And that's not God's will. His will is that we would continue on the journey that he has for us so that we can fulfill God's plan in our life. And the only thing that hinders us from fulfilling God's plan is when we have confidence in ourselves, confidence in the flesh.

And so the Lord allows weakness. He allows trials to come into our lives so that we would continue to depend on him. His ultimate goal is not that we would be perfect according to the law, not that we would know nothing against ourselves.

The goal is that we would continue to look under Jesus and we would run the race that he has set before us. And we would see, Lord, I have farther to go. I have farther to go in my walk with you.

And that's why our seasons change. That's why things become different for us so that we learn that lesson. I have farther to go.

I think of an example of this would be children going to school. So they passed, you know, my children, grade one, grade two, grade three, they pass their school and they think, well, this is it, no more school. You know, and I'm good, I've arrived.

Well, no, unfortunately they're not arrived. They got to go to the next grade because there's more to learn. And we as Christians, we have more to learn.

We come to a place of I'm satisfied with being in grade one as a Christian. I'm totally happy and I'm confident in myself, but we don't realize that we are miles away from where we need to be. And this is why the Lord challenges us.

This is why he changes us. This is why he brings us into affliction and trials and tests so that we would learn from them and that we would grow. We would grow spiritually.

We would get victory. We would take that spiritual lamb that the Lord has for us. So even though we've come to a certain place and we have confidence, let's remember that the apostle Paul wrote here, I had confidence to put everything, like I had confidence to be in the exact spot that I needed to be, but the Lord didn't see it that way.

The Lord met him on the way when he was going to persecute the Christians and he was traveling to Damascus. The bright light shone and showed him, Paul, you are persecuting me. And he realized at that point that he was a filthy man.

He realized that that meant he was a sinful man and he didn't know God at all. This is a terrible place to be is that we can be in such a spiritual condition that we think that we're doing fine, but we don't know the Lord at all. We have farther to go.

And this was such a dramatic circumstance for Paul. And I think according to the measure of his pride, he was so proud, he was so zealous for the righteousness of the law that he was going to persecute Christians, put them in jail and put them to death. And that's an unbelievable place to be.

Some of us would say, I would never get to Zeve to that point, but we can. We can keep all the law. We can do all the good works.

We can do all these things, but they might not be according to the faith. And they might just be because we're trying to be a good person. But being a good person doesn't make us commendable to God.

Being a good person, being, I'm not doing the drugs anymore. I'm not smoking, I'm not drinking. I'm not partying anymore.

I'm not living in that sin anymore. So I'm perfectly fine in the situation that I'm in. That's not the case.

We have farther to go. We may have self-righteousness in our life. We may have pride in our life.

We may have self-confidence in our life, in our own abilities. And the Lord doesn't want that. He sees that.

No, I want you to depend on me and I want you to hold fast to me. But look what he says here in verse seven. This was the secret that gave him victory in a spiritual walk.

He says, but whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of knowing Christ. Whatever things were gained to me, his own righteousness, no matter how much he did his things and obeyed the law, those things were a loss to him. He was accounted as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and I count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ. I know some Christians, even myself, at times where the Lord has removed things from my life, he's taken them from me, and I haven't considered it joy to lose them for the sake of knowing Christ. When you lose something in your life that you value that is hindering your walk with the Lord, whenever you exalt something in your life above Jesus and his word and being obedient to him, that person becomes, that thing becomes an idol.

That thing becomes an idol and it hinders your walk with the Lord. It can even be self-righteousness. It can even be the fact that I'm a good person and I go to church, I pray, I read the Bible, I do all these things, but that can hinder you from actually knowing Christ.

And praise be to God that he would allow you to stumble, to fall in those situations, to humble you so that you might come to know Christ. That it's not of you, that your righteousness comes from the Lord. And sometimes the Lord allows men to fall in this situation to show them that their righteousness is not of Christ, it's actually from the law.

And sometimes we wonder, well, why am I going through such a difficult circumstance? Why is it so difficult? It's because the Lord is trying to teach us this one thing. He's trying to teach us that our righteousness in his sight is but filthy rags and we have farther to go. We have farther to go in our walk with him.

And he allows us sometimes if we don't humble ourselves, he allows us to be humbled. And I've experienced this more than probably anybody knows is the Lord has allowed me to be humbled. Rather than humbling myself and saying, Lord, I'm not where I need to be.

I've gotten strong, I've gotten proud. And so what does the Lord allow? He allows you to fall. He allows you to stumble into sin and those things.

And that's where we have to remind ourselves of the things that have happened in the past so that we are prepared when those tests and trials come again in the future. We have to be on guard against that, against pride, against spiritual pride, so that we stay humble. Why is it that the Lord keeps us humble? What's it for? It's so that we would have his grace.

It says right here, I count them all loss to know the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord. And so sometimes the Lord allows you to lose things in your life so that you might gain Christ. But Paul goes even further.

He says, I have learned to count them but rubbish. Some of us are still mad that we've lost that thing that God does not want us to have. We're upset with the Lord.

Lord, that relationship I was in, why can't I have it? And we don't count it but rubbish for knowing the Lord. And the Lord has removed it from our lives, praise God, but we've still held on to it. We're still hoping that somehow we will work out it.

That's not God's will. God's will is not for us in that area. God has actually removed it because it's kept us from following the Lord.

Have we come to the place yet where we can say, I count it but rubbish. I count it but rubbish. I count that thing that was in front of your sight, Lord, not only the good things, but also the bad things.

The bad things we count but rubbish, but also those things that were gained to me, those things that were commendable to you, those things that gave you honor. Can you say those things are rubbish for the sake of knowing the Lord? Can we look at that way? Some of us have still not had that attitude. We're mad at the Lord that he's taken those things out of our lives.

And we can't do that. We have to say, Lord, that's rubbish because I get to gain you. I get to know you and I'm thankful that you removed it out of my life.

And look what it says in verse nine. And it says, I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, which comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death. Do you know how we grow with the Lord as we go through sufferings? The sufferings and the trials that I go through today are much different when I first came to the Lord.

Although when I first came to the Lord, those little trials seem like mountains. They seem like very difficult things, but you know what? The Lord carried me through. He brought me through them and through it, I came to know him in a deeper way.

But then he started to bring me through bigger trials and bigger trials and even bigger ones. And as you walk with the Lord, that's what you're going to experience. More trials, more humiliation, more humbling so that you might learn to depend on him and not on yourself so that we realize that we have farther to go in him.

It says right here that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. What is the power of his resurrection? And I want to read about that here in Romans chapter six, verse one. We have to remember that there first has to be a death in order that there may be a life.

And you first have to die to sin in order that the life of Christ may be in you. And that unfortunately comes through suffering and denying yourself and denying your flesh. You have to deny your flesh, what your flesh wants, what God does not want you to have, what is sinful.

And so Romans six, verse one, it says, what shall we say then? Are we to continue sinning that grace may abound? I had a brother recently text me saying, I get strong and I keep falling, I get strong and I keep falling. And I realized I'm like, Lord, you're allowing this man to fall so that he would be humbled. Because sometimes we start to look down on people and we have to remember that it's only because of what Christ

has done for us and brought us through that we are at where we're at.

So we have to give him glory and remind ourselves of that. But what does Paul say here? He says, what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may increase? There's a false gospel today that says that you can live in sin, you've prayed a prayer and you can continue to go to heaven. It's fine if you continue to live in sin.

But the Bible says this, are we to say then, are we to continue in sin that God's grace may abound? No, we're not supposed to. May it never be. How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into death? Therefore, we've been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

You know, the time that I experienced newness of life was when there was a death. There was a death. We know baptism is a symbol.

I am no longer living for myself, I'm living for God. But when I started to live in victory over certain sins in my life was there first had to be a dying. And the dying had to come through suffering in the flesh.

First Peter four verse one says, arm yourselves with the same mind for he who has suffered in the flesh will cease from sinning. And you wanna stop sinning, then you have to cease from sin. You have to stop sinning, you need to suffer in the flesh.

And the only way that you're gonna stop sinning is actually if you suffer in your flesh. It's the only way. The Bible is clear about that.

And so don't expect that the sin will just immediately drop off. It's not going to. The way that it happens is through suffering and denying yourself.

And the Lord taking you through humbling circumstances so that he can lift us up. It says right here, for if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. And this is the hope that you need to have is when you're denying yourself of the sin, when the temptation is there and the difficulty is there that afterwards is going to be a resurrection.

And you're going to walk in that newness of life. One day that thing is gonna go away. One thing that day that sin that you're fighting against is going to go away through the power of Jesus Christ.

And that's through his resurrection power. And that only comes through the fellowship of his sufferings and being conformed to his death. I'll give an example.

Some of us are worried about our future. We're worried about our future, but it's not God's will that we would worry about our future. It doesn't matter what age you're at.

In fact, I would say my mom, who is an older lady, I would say sometimes she worries more about the future than sometimes I do, because you come to a place in your life where you're like you're left on your own and you have to trust in the Lord. But it's not good that we would get anxious about it to the point that we don't know what to do and we fret. And that's not God's will, whether you're a young person or whether we're advancing years.

God's will is that we would learn to trust him. And so he doesn't want us to sin in that area. But the only way that we're gonna overcome that is if in our minds, we take thoughts captive.

We say, Lord, I'm trusting in you. You know the hairs that are on my head. You're gonna take care of me.

Whatever season that you bring me into, I'm gonna trust that you're gonna use it for my good. I'm trusting that you're gonna cause it so that I would press on to know the Lord. I'll finish in Philippians where Paul says this.

He says this, I forget what lies behind and I press on to Lord what lies ahead. And we have to forget what lies behind. All the good things, the place that we're at, the comfortable position that we're in, we must remember that no, God's will is that we would go farther down the road.

The journey has yet to continue. We need to grow spiritually. We need to grow even naturally.

The Lord wants us to continue to press forward. And so the only way that that's gonna happen is if the Lord puts us into a circumstance where we are on our knees saying, Lord, have mercy on me. Lord, help me, I can't do this on my own.

Lord, I need your strength. I need your help. And if you have that desire in your heart, the Bible says that you are becoming a mature Christian.

I'll read that verse to you. Philippians three again. Some of us are wondering where we're at spiritually, but the attitude of a mature Christian, a person who's walked with the Lord, is in Philippians three.

It says, verse 14, brethren, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are mature in the Lord, have this attitude. Those who are mature in the Lord have that attitude.

They realize I am not where I need to be. I press on. I know some Christians and they are perfectly content being in the situation that they're at.

They're perfectly fine with doing their day-to-day life. My friends, I'm not. I'm not.

I'm not satisfied with where I'm at in my spiritual condition. I need to grow. And I wanna have that attitude.

And that comes through having a burning desire in your heart to want to know the Lord. So I press on. Lest therefore, who have this attitude, and if anyone has a different attitude, God will reveal that to them also.

However, let us keep living to the same standard which we have attained. So some of us have grown spiritually. We've gotten victory over certain sin.

And then we've backslid. We've backslid into the things that we used to do and we know are sinful. We can't do that.

We need to get back to the place where we were having victory. We have to live to that same standard to which you've attained. So you've worked hard.

You've been diligent. You've persevered. You've come to this place.

But you know what? We need to keep going. We can't just settle. We can't just put our feet up.

We can't just rest a while. We can't just say, my master's a long time in coming. I'm just gonna put my feet up and I'm gonna rest.

We can't do that. No, my friends, we need to be on guard. We need to be spiritually on guard.

We need to be watchful. We need to see where our true condition is. I know the Lord has challenged me many times in this area is that, Dan, whenever you've put your feet up, that's when the trial comes around the corner.

And you know what happens when that trial comes? You sin. You grumble against the Lord. You complain because you weren't spiritually ready in your heart.

You didn't have that attitude of, I need to move forward. I need to continue to grow in the Lord. A truly humble person will say in their hearts, I'm not where I need to be, Lord.

I can see that you're working in my life. Thank you for this season and I'm pressing on. But praise God that he's actually brought you this far.

He's done a good work in your life. He is working in your life, but let's not be satisfied. Let's not be satisfied with where we're at.

Let's keep going. Say, Lord, I wanna go further with you. I wanna know you more.

I know you this much. I know you this much. I've experienced you, but I wanna know you more and help me and give me the strength to do that and to carry on, to carry my cross every day, to carry my cross every day, to not be afraid when the tribulations come, to help me not to be anxious and help me to move forward with you because I know that you're gonna work all this together for my good.

But let us not at that time turn back to the way of life that we used to live by. Let us not go back to the dumb. Let us not go back to the toilet bowl of the world that we used to indulge in.

Let us not go back there. That's what it is. All the sin that's in the world is like a big giant toilet bowl.

Whenever I go to the toilet bowl and I see it's filthy, I hate it. And that's what happens when we go back to the sin of the world, when we go back to the things of the world, when we turn back from following the Lord. That's what it's like.

You're just jumping right back into that toilet bowl and drinking from that water. That's gross. No, my friends, let's go on and ask the Lord to purify us, to cleanse us, to make us ready for him so that when he does come, we can stand before him confidently and say, you know what, Lord? I'm so thankful that you kept pushing me to move forward.

I'm so thankful that you are still working in my life and that you were causing me to grow in Jesus.

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