



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Ezekiel, Daniel Sermon Series
Supports Session 5: Warns
Sermon Title: "Removing Briars and Thorns"
Passage: Ezekiel 28:20-24

Connection to Ezekiel 28:11-19,25-26

God offers grace to the humble and brings down the proud. In His grace, He glorifies Himself so the humble will acknowledge Him as Lord.

Introduction/Opening

A briar patch will never be a welcomed sight as long as it has thorns that can hurt us when we get near it. Furthermore, thorn bushes don't usually go away by themselves. They must be removed.

God spoke through Ezekiel and compared dealing with the proud nation of Sidon to pulling up briars and thorns (28:24). The word picture provides us with insights into how God deals with arrogant rebellion. We can see for ourselves how He handles individuals or nations bent on needling His people into turning away from Him.

Outline

1. The Problem (vv. 20-22)
 - a. God told the people of Sidon that He stood against them. Sidon was the son of Canaan (Genesis 10:15). The Lord warned His people to destroy cities like Sidon as soon as they reached the promised land because they promoted idol worship (Numbers 33:50-56). Unfortunately, God's people ignored His command (Judges 1:31). Generations later, Jezebel and her pagan priests came from Sidon (1 Kings 16:31-33).
 - b. God stands against anyone who needles His people with the temptation to ignore Him and choose pagan deities or philosophies. Godless leaders lure God's people away from lives of devotion to Him, entangling them in a thorny thicket of lies. God stands against them like a farmer stands against briars and thorns growing in the garden.
2. The Solution (vv. 22-23)
 - a. God intended to reveal His glory and to manifest His holiness to the residents of Sidon. By glorifying Himself, God would turn their heads and hearts toward Him. They would see for themselves that He had set Himself apart from all others. He would use pestilence and war to humble them so they would recognize Him as Lord.

- b. God responds to attempts to promote godliness in a way that's redemptive. Granted, His wisdom may move Him to destroy an entire nation. However, He demonstrates His grace by glorifying Himself so arrogant rebellion can be replaced with humble submission. Similarly, the beauty and safety of a garden can only be restored when the briars and thorns have been removed.

3. The Result (v. 24)

- a. God stood against Sidon because He wanted to deliver His people from spiritual briars and thorns. In the process, He planned to glorify Himself in Sidon so the people there would turn to Him. Seeing Him as entirely distinct from other gods they worshiped would prompt them to cast their idols aside and embrace Him as Lord. For that reason, He would get rid of the thorn bushes that had needled His people and caused them so much pain.
- b. God's redemptive purpose can be seen in other passages in His Word. One of the most powerful examples can be found in John 3:17. John wrote that Jesus didn't come to condemn the world. Quite the opposite, He came so the world could be saved through Him. A gardener troubled with thorn bushes has only one choice regarding what to do about them. He must get rid of the briar patches, so they won't prick and hurt anyone who passes near them.

Conclusion

God cares for us like farmers care for their gardens. He wants us to thrive as we walk with Him. Therefore, He pulls up the briar patches that potentially will hurt us. Granted, taking them away may be difficult to endure, but trusting Him to know what's best will give us a sense of His peace. So, turn to Him and acknowledge Him as the Lord of your life. Surrender to Him and trust Him to care for you.

Argile Smith serves as the pastor of Parkway Baptist Church, Biloxi, MS. He graduated from William Carey College (BA) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv, PhD).