
When Sorrow Comes

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

IS GOD REALLY A GOD OF LOVE? If so, why does He permit so much suffering in the world? Why does He not stop the killing and atrocities of our day? Why does He permit His own children to suffer pain, heartache and disappointments?

For some strange reason, Christians seem to have concluded that we are not to suffer; and when we do, something must be wrong with God. Listen to Paul's desire to become acquainted with suffering: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death" (Philippians 3: 10).

What strange things are happening to us! We are now a nation dominated by our emotions. Most all TV programs demand an emotional response in order to be satisfactory to the viewers. The Hollywood movies that are popular today portray intense emotional involvement on the part of the actors and actresses to demand the reaction of love, hatred, and sympathy on the part of the audience. The reason filthy soap operas on TV are so popular is the attraction of a vicarious participation with the emotional problems of others.

We have been brainwashed by the high pressure advertising of our day, that it is wrong to have feelings of guilt or pain. So we have the cop-out of alcohol, drugs, and transference of guilt. We are never personally responsible for our suffering. Therefore, rather than deal with the cause, let's take a pill in order to relax, another in order to relax, another in order to get going, another to sleep, and another to wake us up. Never should we suffer any pain. We should automatically take some drug to dull it. The consequence? We find ourselves in serious physical condition because of refusing to allow God's method of warning us that something is wrong (pain).

So many things happen. What should we do in our day of disappointment, hour of despair and moment of distress? Where should we turn? Here is your answer! "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). "That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (Psalm 104:28).

Here is Scripture that indicates the declaration of God's willingness to meet our every need in the midst of sorrow. Now if you are not going to believe it, don't waste your time reading it. If you are going to rest upon it, believe God to do exactly that which He has promised, then read it and begin to rest and relax with pressures you face.

Psalm 121

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

The Why of Sorrow

Why, ask the forlorn children who are confronted with sickness and death of their parents? Why, asks the husband or wife sitting in their solitary grief, with a keen sense of disappointment, possibly with the sting of injustice? Listen to the still small voice, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). Listen to the Savior Who says, "Jesus

answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

God wants us to know Him in an intimate relationship. Sorrow often comes to bring us to the place of a deep revelation of God Himself. Nothing is more needful. There is no way of knowing him comparable to the pathway of sorrow and suffering. When in trouble we cry for Him; when weak we lean upon Him. When insufficient of ourselves, we draw upon His sufficiency. With hearts sore, tender and bleeding, we open them to His healing.

Suffering brings us to a more Christ like attitude. Nothing brings us closer to the Lord than affliction. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:71, 72). "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

Our afflictions prepare us for a ministry to others in the midst of their needed comfort. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Corinthians 1:4). The heart that has not suffered is unsympathetic. It cannot respond to the sorrow of others, nor can it enter into an understanding of their grief. Since we live in a suffering, sorrowing world, how thankful we should be that God prepares us in the school of sorrow that we may minister a "peace that passeth all understanding" to others.

The chastening of the Lord should demand our thanks to a loving Father, Who ministers it. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:5, 6).

The Lord knows the corrective discipline we are in need of. If we desire to accomplish His will, plan and purpose, we will fall on our face with gratitude for His corrective chastening. Thank God for His discipline! "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all of them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

At times we go through difficulty to overcome pride. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (II Corinthians 12:7).

Suffering sometimes is God's method of revealing His strength. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9, 10).

There is a word in the Bible that we have almost forgotten. It is the word ENDURE! "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Timothy 2:3, 4). Burn on, fire of adversity and suffering! God is on the throne to accomplish His purpose of conforming us to Himself!

God Cares

Here is the most thrilling truth in all the Bible: "Casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7). "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49: 15, 16).

God's concern for our trials, tribulations and sorrow has been sufficiently communicated to us in His Word, the Bible. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6, 7). "And we know that all things worketh together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Remember, it is ALL THINGS that God has promised will work together for good when the two conditions of this verse are met. ALL THINGS!

Every promise in the Bible concerning Eternal Life and Heaven shall become a reality whenever a loved one slips into the presence of the Lord. Our sorrow can only be temporary. To the Christian, leaving us means only gain for him or her. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). May God help us to rest upon this premise.

Do's and Don'ts

When sorrow comes your way, remember the following suggestions:

DON'T think your situation is something special. Nothing is new. One generation passes on and makes room for another. If Christ carries, death will become a reality to all of us. Your sorrows are not different or more severe than others. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

DON'T surrender to self pity. To feel sorry for yourself will lead to introversion. This action will delay the healing of your wound.

DON'T allow yourself to continue in excessive grief. This is no way to show your love for a departed friend or relative. They would not want to be responsible for it. Excessive grief will deteriorate your personality. Real love for a person motivates your reaction as your departed loved one would desire of you. Sorrow is temporary. "Therein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Peter 1:6).

DON'T detail and retell your sorrows. Perhaps to a loving friend or two, but do not syndicate your sorrows with everybody you meet. What memory are you giving to others? Do they think of your grief when your memory comes to their consciousness? Stop reliving sorrow and pain.

DON'T resign yourself to continual sorrow. The only way your sorrow will continue is by keeping it artificially alive. Place your mind on constructive action in assisting others who are alive around you. The further you are removed from sorrow, the less it affects you. Time is a great healer, if you allow it to be.

DON'T fight against trouble. If you have absolute control, trouble would not be your portion. To fight it gives more concentration of your attention on it. Call your attention off from your sorrow by getting into constructive work for others. Dwell on God's precious promises for the future. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

DON'T complain. If you practice this common exercise, your mind will cultivate reasons to justify that complaint. It will manufacture them, exaggerating the woes and troubles. Such action will increase them.

DO check if you are the cause of your difficulty. You can be! Have you confessed your known sins? Have you asked God to reveal them to you? What about your attitude toward God, His Word, His children, His dealing with you? Are you willing to admit your frustrations and wrong reactions to that which has come your way? Christian, it is confession and faith in His promise of forgiveness that brings His divine power to work for us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

DO realize that your problems may not be your sin or wrong reactions. Suffering is not always a sign of sin. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2,3). I challenge you to allow your difficulty to make you and not destroy you. Declare and demand your sorrow to bring glory to God, who shall make you stronger for having gone through it.

DO learn to draw on God's resources in the midst of sorrow. The Bible is full of promises in the midst of all situations. When we find ourselves in the fire of adversity, nothing is changed about the Person of God or His promises. Christ is forever the same. (Hebrews 13:8)

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:13, 19).

DO thank God for your sorrow, even if you cannot understand it now. You may not be appreciative of the sorrow itself, but for what God is going to do to you and through you because of it. He is going to help you to use it, as well as to bear it. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:17,18).

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