



AND THERE
SHALL BE NO MORE
SORROW

*And God shall wipe away all tears
from their eyes; and there shall
be no more death, neither sorrow,
nor crying, neither shall there be
any more pain: for the former
things are passed away.*

Revelation 21:4

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger, D.A.

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Forward

Sometimes we avoid conferring with others because we fear that problems or arguments may develop.

Instead, we should openly discuss our plans and actions with friends, counselors, and advisers. Good communication helps everyone understand the situation better, it reduces gossip, and it builds unity in the church.

Throughout this study, we will view some of the things that bring sorrow.

God felt sorrow because the people rejected his love and plan for their lives. Jesus wept on several occasions.

When believers stand faithfully during times of trouble, they will receive a crown of joy when they stand before the Lord.

Disappointment and discouragement will sometimes come. But the hope that is in Christ will help and encourage us to look beyond the present day problems to the eternal reward.

You may, as did many of those described in the scriptures, feel that sorrow and crying will last forever. But be faithful for you shall receive a crown of life.

Chapter 1



Sorrow of God, for people's sin

Genesis 6:6-7

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Does this mean that God regretted creating humanity? Was he admitting he made a mistake? No, God does not change his mind (1 Samuel 15:29). Instead, he was expressing sorrow for what the people had done to themselves, as a parent might express sorrow over a rebellious child. God was sorry that the people chose sin and death instead of a relationship with him.

The people's sin grieved God. Our sins break God's heart as much as sin did in Noah's day. Noah, however, pleased God, although he was far from perfect. We can follow Noah's example and find "favor in the eyes of the LORD" in spite of the sin that surrounds us.

Repentance involves true sorrow for sin.

Judges 2:4

When the angel of the Lord finished speaking, the Israelites wept loudly.

The people of Israel knew they had sinned, and they wept aloud, responding with deep sorrow. Because we have a tendency to sin, repentance is the true measure of spiritual sensitivity. Repentance means asking God to forgive us, and then abandoning our sinful ways.

But we cannot do this sincerely unless we are truly sorry for our sinful actions. When we are aware that we have done wrong, we should admit it plainly to God rather than try to cover it up or hope we can get away with it.

Naomi trusted God despite her sorrow.

Ruth 4:15

May this child restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you so much and who has been better to you than seven sons!"

Ruth's love for her mother-in-law was known and recognized throughout the town. From the beginning of the book of Ruth to the end, her kindness toward others remained unchanged.

God brought great blessings out of Naomi's tragedy, even greater than "seven sons," or an abundance of heirs. Throughout her tough times, Naomi continued to trust God. And God, in his time, blessed her greatly.

Even in our sorrow and calamity, God can bring great blessings. Be like Naomi, and don't turn your back on God when tragedy strikes. Instead of asking "How can God allow this to happen to me?" trust him. He will be with you in the hard time.

Why was God sorry he made Saul king?

1 Samuel 5:11

So the people summoned the rulers again and begged them, "Please send the Ark of the God of Israel back to its own country, or it will kill us all." For the plague from God had already begun and great fear was sweeping across the city.

The people were in sorrow as their people were dying by keeping the Ark of God in their land.

Those who fight against God's people may find themselves cursed rather than blessed.

Grieving helps us deal with sorrow.

2 Samuel 1:11-12

David and his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news. They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the Lord's army and the nation of Israel, because so many had died that day.

David and his men were visibly shaken over Saul's death. Their actions showed their genuine sorrow over the loss of their king, their friend Jonathan, and the other soldiers of Israel who died that day. They were not ashamed to grieve.

Today, some people consider expressing emotions to be a sign of weakness. Those who wish to appear strong try to hide their feelings. But expressing our grief can help us deal with our intense sorrow when a loved one dies.

Sorrow may be needed to draw you to God.

Luke 15:17

"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired men have food enough to spare, and here I am, dying of hunger!"

The younger son, like many who are rebellious and immature, wanted to be free to live as he pleased, and he had to hit bottom before he came to his senses. It often takes great sorrow and tragedy to cause people to look to the only One who can help them.

Stop and look before you hit bottom. You will save yourself and your family much grief.

God will end all sorrow.

Rev. 7:17

For the Lamb who stands in front of the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all their tears."

God will provide for his children's needs in their eternal home where there will be no hunger, thirst, or pain, and he will wipe away all tears. When you are suffering or torn apart by sorrow, take comfort in this promise of complete protection and relief.

All who have been faithful through the ages are singing before God's throne. Their tribulations and sorrows are over: no more tears for sin, for all sins are forgiven; no more tears for suffering, for all suffering is over; no more tears for death, for all believers have been resurrected to die no more.

Chapter 2



The weeping of Jesus

John 11:35

Then Jesus wept.

When Jesus saw the weeping and wailing, he too wept openly. Perhaps he empathized with their grief, or perhaps he was troubled at their unbelief. In either case, Jesus showed that he cares enough for us to weep with us in our sorrow.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!

How could an Old Testament person understand the idea of Christ dying for our sins (our transgressions and iniquities)—actually bearing the punishment that we deserved?

The sacrifices suggested this idea, but it is one thing to kill a lamb, and something quite different to think of God's chosen servant as that Lamb. But God was pulling aside the curtain of time to let the people of Isaiah's day look ahead to the suffering of the future Messiah and the resulting forgiveness made available to all mankind.

The Agony of Jesus in the garden

Hebrews 5:7-8

While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could deliver him out of death. And God heard his prayers because of his reverence for God. So even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.

Jesus was in great agony as he prepared to face death (Luke 22:41-44). Although Jesus cried out to God, asking to be delivered, he was prepared to suffer humiliation, separation from his Father, and death in order to do God's will.

At times we will undergo trials, not because we want to suffer, but because we want to obey God. Let Jesus' obedience sustain and encourage you in times of trial. You will be able to face anything if you know that Jesus Christ is with you.

Have you ever felt that God didn't hear your prayers? Be sure you are praying with reverent submission, willing to do what God wants. God responds to his obedient children.

Jesus' human life was not a script that he passively followed. It was a life that he chose freely (John 10:17-18).

It was a continuous process of making the will of God the Father his own. Jesus chose to obey, even though obedience led to suffering and death. Because Jesus obeyed perfectly, even under great trial, he can help us obey, no matter how difficult obedience seems to be.

God's presence is real in times of tears

Isaiah 41:10

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

God chose Israel through Abraham because he wanted to, not because the people deserved it (Deut. 7:6-8; Deut. 9:4-6). Although God chose the Israelites to represent him to the world, they failed to do this; so God punished them and sent them into captivity. Now all believers are God's chosen people, and all share the responsibility of representing him to the world. One day God will bring all his faithful people together.

We need not fear because:

- (1) God is with us ("I am with you"),
- (2) God has established a relationship with us ("I am your God"),
- (3) God gives us assurance of his strength, help, and victory over sin and death. Have you realized all the ways God has helped you?

No more sorrow or death

Rev. 21:4

He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The "Holy City, the new Jerusalem" is described as the place where God will "wipe every

tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying.

What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it’s not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who love him. We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

Chapter 3



Those weeping will return with a song.

Psalm 126:6

**They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the harvest.**

God's ability to restore life is beyond our understanding. Forests burn down and are able to grow back. Broken bones heal. Even grief is not a permanent condition. Our tears can be seeds that will grow into a harvest of joy because God is able to bring good out of tragedy.

When burdened by sorrow, know that your times of grief will end and that you will again find joy. We must be patient as we wait. God's great harvest of joy is coming!

Never give up on your harvest

Galatians 6:9

So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

The favor of the Lord last a life time.

Psalm 30:5

**His anger lasts for a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may go on all night,
but joy comes with the morning.**

Like a shot given by a doctor, the discomfort of God's anger lasts only a moment, but the good effects go on for a long time. Let God's anger be a sharp pain that warns you to turn from sin.

Sorrow and sighing will flee away

Isaiah 35:10

Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

This highway, the "Way of Holiness," is the way that righteous pilgrims will take from the desert of suffering to Zion (Jerusalem). It is found only by following God. Only the redeemed will travel God's highway; they will be protected from wicked travelers and harmful animals.

God is preparing a way for his people to travel to his home, and he will walk with us. God never stops at simply pointing the way; he is always beside us as we go.

Chapter 4



Disappointment comes from leaving God out of your plans.

James 4:13-16

Look here, you people who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit."

How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you will be boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil.

It is good to have goals, but goals will disappoint us if we leave God out of them. There is no point in making plans as though God does not exist, because the future is in his hands.

What would you like to be doing ten years from now? One year from now, or even tomorrow? How will you react if God steps in and rearranges your plans? Plan ahead, but hold your plans loosely. Put God's desires at the center of your planning; he will never disappoint you.

Life is short no matter how many years we live. Don't be deceived into thinking that you have lots of remaining time to live for Christ, to enjoy your loved ones, or to do what you know you should. Live for God today!

Then, no matter when your life ends, you will have fulfilled God's plan for you.

Don't be discouraged when some reject your faith. "

Exodus 5:3

But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared. "Let us take a three-day trip into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the Lord our God. If we don't, we will surely die by disease or the sword."

Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron because he did not know or respect God. People who do not know God may not listen to his word or his messengers.

Like Moses and Aaron, we need to persist. When others reject you or your faith, don't be surprised or discouraged. Continue to tell them about God, trusting him to open minds and soften stubborn hearts.

Keep your faith in times of discouragement

Exodus 9:1

"Go back to Pharaoh," the Lord commanded Moses. "Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me."

This was the fifth time God sent Moses back to Pharaoh with the demand, “Let my people go!” By this time, Moses may have been tired and discouraged, but he continued to obey.

Is there a difficult conflict you must face again and again? Don’t give up when you know what is right to do. As Moses discovered, persistence is rewarded.

Pray when you feel discouraged.

1 Samuel 1:10

Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the Lord.

Hannah had good reason to feel discouraged and bitter. She was unable to bear children; she shared her husband with a woman who ridiculed her (1 Samuel 1:7); her loving husband could not solve her problem (1 Samuel 1:8); and even the high priest misunderstood her motives (1 Samuel 1:14).

But instead of retaliating or giving up hope, Hannah prayed. She brought her problem honestly before God.

Each of us may face times of barrenness when nothing “comes to birth” in our work, service, or relationships. It is difficult to pray in faith when we feel so ineffective. But, as Hannah discovered, prayer opens the way for God to work (1 Samuel 1:19-20).

How Hannah overcame discouragement

1 Samuel 1:18

"Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad.

Earlier Hannah had been discouraged to the point of being physically sick and unable to eat. At this point, she returned home well and happy.

The change in her attitude may be attributed to three factors:

- (1) She honestly prayed to God (1 Samuel 1:11);
- (2) She received encouragement from Eli (1 Samuel 1:17);
- (3) She resolved to leave the problem with God (1 Samuel 1:18).

This is the antidote for discouragement: tell God how you really feel and leave your problems with him. Then rely upon the support of good friends and counselors.

Don't let people discourage you.

1 Samuel 17:28-32

But when David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men, he was angry. "What are you doing around here anyway?" he demanded.

"What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and dishonesty. You just want to see the battle!"

"What have I done now?" David replied. "I was only asking a question!" He walked over to some others and asked them the same thing and received the same answer.

Then David's question was reported to King Saul, and the king sent for him. "Don't worry about a thing," David told Saul. "I'll go fight this Philistine!"

Criticism couldn't stop David. While the rest of the army stood around, he knew the importance of taking action. With God to fight for him, there was no reason to wait.

People may try to discourage you with negative comments or mockery, but continue to do what you know is right. By doing what is right, you will be pleasing God, whose opinion matters most.

Neh. 4:1-5

Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends and the Samaritan army officers, "What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they are doing?"

Do they think they can build the wall in a day if they offer enough sacrifices? Look at those charred stones they are pulling out of the rubbish and using again!"

Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, "That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!"

Then I prayed, "Hear us, O our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land!"

Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked you to anger here in the presence of the builders."

Ridicule can cut deeply, causing discouragement and despair. Sanballat and Tobiah used ridicule to try to dissuade the Jews from building the wall.

Instead of trading insults, however, Nehemiah prayed, and the work continued.

When you are mocked for your faith or criticized for doing what you know is right, refuse to respond in the same way or to become discouraged. Tell God how you feel and remember his promise to be with you. This will give you encouragement and strength to carry on.

Nehemiah is not praying for revenge but that God's justice would be carried out. His prayer is similar to many of David's

Often discouragement comes after spiritual victory.

1 Kings 19:3

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there.

Elijah experienced the depths of fatigue and discouragement just after his two great spiritual victories: the defeat of the prophets of Baal and the answered prayer for rain.

Often discouragement sets in after great spiritual experiences, especially those requiring physical effort or involving great emotion. To lead him out of depression, God first let Elijah rest and eat.

Then God confronted him with the need to return to his mission—to speak God's words in Israel. Elijah's battles were not over; there was still work for him to do.

When you feel let down after a great spiritual experience, remember that God's purpose for your life is not yet over.

Discouragement makes us feel sorry for ourselves.

1 Kings 19:10

Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

Elijah thought he was the only person left who was still true to God. He had seen both the king's court and the priesthood become corrupt.

After experiencing great victory at Mount Carmel, he had to run for his life. Lonely and discouraged, he forgot that others had remained faithful during the nation's wickedness.

When you are tempted to think that you are the only one remaining faithful to a task, don't stop to feel sorry for yourself. Self-pity will dilute the good you are doing.

Be assured that even if you don't know who they are, others are faithfully obeying God and fulfilling their duties.

Remember God's purposes during times of discouragement.

Neh. 4:10-14

Then the people of Judah began to complain that the workers were becoming tired. There was so much rubble to be moved that we could never get it done by ourselves.

Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, "Before they know what's happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work."

The Jews who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, "They will come from all directions and attack us!" [13] So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows.

Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the leaders and the people and said to them, "Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your friends, your families, and your homes!"

Accomplishing any large task is tiring. There are always pressures that foster discouragement—the task seems impossible, it can never be finished, or too many factors are working against us.

The only cure for fatigue and discouragement is focusing on God's purposes. Nehemiah reminded the workers of their calling, their goal, and God's protection.

If you are overwhelmed by an assignment, tired, and discouraged, remember God's purpose for your life and his special purpose for the project.

Avoiding discouragement when you witness

John 12:37-38

But despite all the miraculous signs he had done, most of the people did not believe in him. This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted:

"Lord, who has believed our message? To whom will the Lord reveal his saving power?"

Jesus had performed many miracles, but most people still didn't believe in him. Likewise, many today won't believe despite all God does.

Don't be discouraged if your witness for Christ doesn't turn as many to him as you'd like. Your job is to continue as a faithful witness. You are responsible to reach out to others, but they are responsible for their own decisions.

Turning discouragement into opportunity

Philip. 1:12-14

And I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.

For everyone here, including all the soldiers in the palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ.

And because of my imprisonment, many of the Christians here have gained confidence and become bolder in telling others about Christ.

Being imprisoned would cause many people to become bitter or to give up, but Paul saw it as one more opportunity to spread the Good News of Christ.

Paul realized that his current circumstances weren't as important as what he did with them. Turning a bad situation into a good one, he reached

out to the Roman soldiers who made up the palace guard and encouraged those Christians who were afraid of persecution.

We may not be in prison, but we still have plenty of opportunities to be discouraged—times of indecision, financial burdens, family conflict, church conflict, or the loss of our jobs.

How we act in such situations will reflect what we believe. Like Paul, look for ways to demonstrate your faith even in bad situations. Whether or not the situation improves, your faith will grow stronger.

How did Paul end up in chains in a Roman prison? While he was visiting Jerusalem, some Jews had him arrested for preaching the gospel, but he appealed to Caesar to hear his case (Acts 21:15-25:12).

He was then escorted by soldiers to Rome, where he was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial—not a trial for breaking civil law, but for proclaiming the Good News of Christ.

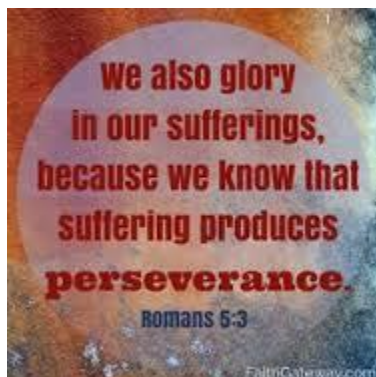
At that time, the Roman authorities did not consider this to be a serious charge. A few years later, however, Rome would take a different view of Christianity and make every effort to stamp it out of existence.

Paul's house arrest allowed him some degree of freedom. He could have visitors, continue to preach, and write letters such as this one.

A brief record of Paul's time in Rome is found in Acts 28:11-31. The "whole palace guard" refers to the Praetorian Guard, the elite troops housed in the emperor's palace.

When we speak fearlessly for Christ, or live faithfully for him during difficult situations, we encourage others to do the same. Be an encouragement by the way that you live.

Chapter 5



Problems may be testing your faith

Genesis 12:10

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

When famine struck, Abram went to Egypt where there was food. Why would there be a famine in the land where God had just called Abram? This was a test of Abram's faith, and Abram passed. He didn't question God's leading when facing this difficulty.

Many believers find that when they determine to follow God, they immediately encounter great obstacles. The next time you face such a test, don't try to second-guess what God is doing. Use the intelligence God gave you, as Abram did when he temporarily moved to Egypt, and wait for new opportunities.

Luke 4:1

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Sometimes we feel that if the Holy Spirit leads us, it will always be “beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:2). But that is not necessarily true.

He led Jesus into the desert for a long and difficult time of testing, and he may also lead us into difficult situations.

When facing trials, first make sure you haven’t brought them on yourself through sin or unwise choices. If you find no sin to confess or unwise behavior to change, then ask God to strengthen you for your test. Finally, be careful to follow faithfully wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

Temptation will often come after a high point in our spiritual lives or ministries (see 1 Kings 18-19 for Elijah’s story of great victory followed by despair). Remember that Satan chooses the times for his attacks. We need to be on our guard in times of victory just as much as in times of discouragement.

The devil, who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, also tempted Jesus in the desert. Satan is a real being, a created but rebellious fallen angel, and not a symbol or an idea. He constantly fights against God and those who follow and obey God. Jesus was a prime target for the devil’s temptations.

Satan succeeded with Adam and Eve, and he hoped to succeed with Jesus too.

2 Thess. 1:5

Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

As we live for Christ, we will experience troubles because we are trying to be God’s people in a perverse world.

Some people say that troubles are the result of sin or lack of faith, but Paul teaches that they may be a part of God's plan for believers. Our problems can help us look upward and forward, instead of inward (Mark 13:35-36; Phil. 3:13-14); they can build strong character (Romans 5:3-4); and they can provide us with opportunities to comfort others who also are struggling (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

Your troubles may be an indication that you are taking a stand for Christ.

There are two dimensions of the relief mentioned by Paul.

We can gain relief in knowing that our sufferings are strengthening us, making us ready for Christ's kingdom.

We can also gain relief in the fact that one day everyone will stand before God; at that time, wrongs will be righted, judgment will be pronounced, and evil will be terminated.

Following God may bring more problems.

Genesis 12:10

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

When famine struck, Abram went to Egypt where there was food. Why would there be a famine in the land where God had just called Abram? This was a test of Abram's faith, and Abram passed. He didn't question God's leading when facing this difficulty. Many believers find that when they determine to follow God, they immediately encounter great obstacles.

The next time you face such a test, don't try to second-guess what God is doing. Use the intelligence God gave you, as Abram did when he temporarily moved to Egypt, and wait for new opportunities.

Exodus 5:4-9

"Who do you think you are," Pharaoh shouted, "distracting the people from their tasks? Get back to work! Look, there are many people here in Egypt, and you are stopping them from doing their work."

That same day Pharaoh sent this order to the slave drivers and foremen he had set over the people of Israel: "Do not supply the people with any more straw for making bricks. Let them get it themselves! But don't reduce their production quotas by a single brick. They obviously don't have enough to do. If they did, they wouldn't be talking about going into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God. Load them down with more work. Make them sweat! That will teach them to listen to these liars!"

Moses and Aaron took their message to Pharaoh just as God directed. The unhappy result was harder work and more oppression for the Hebrews. Sometimes hardship comes as a result of obeying God. Are you following God but still suffering—or suffering even worse than before?

If your life is miserable, don't assume you have fallen out of God's favor. You may be suffering for doing good in an evil world.

Mixing straw with mud made bricks stronger and more durable. Pharaoh had supplied the slaves with straw, but now he made them find their own straw and keep up their production quota as well.

What problems can teach us

James 1:2-4

Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. It is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly? God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain.

Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for promising to be with you in rough times. Ask him to help you solve your problems or to give you the strength to endure them. Then be patient. God will not leave you alone with your problems; he will stay close and help you grow.

Mark 14:28

But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there."

It's easy to think that Satan temporarily gained the upper hand in this drama about Jesus' death.

But we see later that God was in control, even in the death of his Son. Satan gained no victory—everything occurred exactly as God had planned.

Mark 5:35-36

While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from Jairus's home with the message, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."

But Jesus ignored their comments and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just trust me."

In Jesus' day, someone who couldn't pay a debt was thrown into prison until the debt was paid. Unless someone came to pay the debt for the prisoner, he or she would probably die there.

It is practical advice to resolve our differences with our enemies before their anger causes more trouble (Proverbs 25:8-10). You may not get into a disagreement that takes you to court, but even small conflicts mend more easily if you try to make peace right away.

In a broader sense, these verses advise us to get things right with our brothers and sisters before we have to stand before God.

God can get you out of any kind of problem.

Exodus 14:21

Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land.

God is concerned about every problem.

Exodus 39:32

And so at last the Tabernacle was finished. The Israelites had done everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

The tabernacle was finally complete to the last detail. God was keenly interested in every minute part. The Creator of the universe was concerned about even the little things. Matthew 10:30 says that God knows the number of hairs on our heads. This shows that God is greatly interested in you. Don't be afraid to talk with him about any of your concerns—no matter how small or unimportant they might seem.

Allow your problems drive you toward not away from God.

2 Cor. 1:8-10

I think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia.

We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it.

In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead. And he did deliver us from mortal danger. And we are confident that he will continue to deliver us.

Paul does not give details about their hardships in Asia, although his accounts of all three missionary journeys record many difficult trials he faced (Acts 13:2-14:28; Acts 15:40-21:17). He does write that they felt that they were going to die, and realized that they could do nothing to help themselves—they simply had to rely on God.

We often depend on our own skills and abilities when life seems easy, but we turn to God when we feel unable to help ourselves. Depending on God is a realization of our own powerlessness without him and our need for his constant touch in our lives.

God is our source of power, and we receive his help by keeping in touch with him. With this attitude of dependence, problems will drive us to God rather than away from him. Learn how to rely on God daily.

Rev. 2:9-11

"I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the slander of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they really aren't because theirs is a synagogue of Satan.

Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The Devil will throw some of you into prison and put you to the test.

You will be persecuted for 'ten days.' Remain faithful even when facing death, and I will give you the crown of life.

"Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be hurt by the second death.

Jesus controls the storms of life.

Matthew 8:25

The disciples went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

Although the disciples had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Christ could control the forces of nature.

There is often a stormy area of our human nature where we feel God can't or won't work.

When we truly understand who God is, however, we will realize that he controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart. Jesus' power that calmed this storm can also help us deal with the problems we face. Jesus is willing to help if we only ask him. We should never discount his power even in terrible trials.

Trusting God with your problems

Mark 4:38-40

Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. Frantically they woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you even care that we are going to drown?"

When he woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Quiet down!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. And he asked them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have faith in me?"

The disciples panicked because the storm threatened to destroy them all, and Jesus seemed unaware and unconcerned. Theirs was a physical storm, but storms come in other forms.

Think about the storms in your life—the situations that cause you great anxiety. Whatever your difficulty, you have two options: You can worry and assume that Jesus no longer cares, or you can resist fear, putting your trust in him.

When you feel like panicking, confess your need for God and then trust him to care for you.

How we underestimate Jesus' help in problems

Mark 4:41

And they were filled with awe and said among themselves, "Who is this man, that even the wind and waves obey him?"

The disciples lived with Jesus, but they underestimated him. They did not see that his power applied to their very own situation. Jesus has been with his people for 20 centuries, and yet we, like the disciples, underestimate his power to handle crises in our lives. The disciples did not yet know enough about Jesus. We cannot make the same excuse.

Our problems should not keep us from God.

Mark 5:25-34

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

And his disciples said unto him, Thou sees the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?

And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

This woman had a seemingly incurable condition causing her to bleed constantly. This may have been a menstrual or uterine disorder that would have made her ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:25-27) and would have excluded her from most social contact.

She desperately wanted Jesus to heal her, but she knew that her bleeding would cause Jesus to be unclean under Jewish law if she touched him. Still, the woman reached out by faith and was healed. Sometimes we feel that our problems will keep us from God. But he is always ready to help.

We should never allow our fear to keep us from approaching him.

Jesus was not angry with this woman for touching him. He knew she had touched him, but he stopped and asked who did it in order to teach her something about faith. Although the woman was healed when she touched him, Jesus said her faith caused the cure. Genuine faith involves action. Faith that isn't put into action is not faith at all.

God hasn't lost sight of your problems.

Mark 6:49

But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

The disciples were surprised to see Jesus walking beside them on the water. But they should have realized that Jesus would help them when they were in trouble. Though they had lost sight of Jesus, he had not lost sight of them. His concern for them overcame their lack of faith. The next time you are in “deep water,” remember that Christ knows your struggle and cares for you.

The disciples were afraid, but Jesus’ presence calmed their fears. We all experience fear. Do we try to deal with it ourselves, or do we let Jesus deal with it? In times of fear and uncertainty, it is calming to know that Christ is always with us (Matthew 28:20). To recognize Christ’s presence is the antidote for fear.

Why we should be able to help others with their problems

Matthew 9:35-38

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few;

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

Jesus needs workers who know how to deal with people’s problems. We can comfort others and show them the way to live because we have been helped with our problems by God and his laborers (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

Ezekiel also compared Israel to sheep without a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:5-6). Jesus came to be the Shepherd, the One who could show people how to avoid life's pitfalls (see John 10:14).

Jesus looked at the crowds following him and referred to them as a field ripe for harvest. Many people are ready to give their lives to Christ if someone would show them how.

Jesus commands us to pray that people will respond to this need for workers. Often, when we pray for something, God answers our prayers by using *us*. Be prepared for God to use you to show another person the way to him.

Developing a new attitude toward your problems

Luke 12:13

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

Problems like this were often brought to rabbis for them to settle. Jesus' response, though not directly to the topic, is not a change of subject. Rather, Jesus is pointing to a higher issue—a correct attitude toward the accumulation of wealth.

Life is more than material goods; far more important is our relationship with God. Jesus put his finger on this questioner's heart.

When we bring problems to God in prayer, he often does the same—showing us how we need to change and grow in our attitude toward the problem.

This answer is often not the one we were looking for, but it is more effective in helping us trace God's hand in our lives.

Don't let problems hinder love.

John 15:17

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Many people try to be good, honest people who do what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the vine? If not, you are missing a special gift he has for you.

Make prayer your first step in solving your problems

Acts 1:12-13

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

After Christ was taken up into heaven, the disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting. Jesus had said they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days, so they waited and prayed.

When you face a difficult task, an important decision, or a baffling dilemma, don't rush into the work and just hope it comes out the way it should. Instead, your first step should be to pray for the Holy Spirit's power and guidance.

Keeping proper focus on your problems

Acts 5:1

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

In Acts 5:1-8:3 we see both internal and external problems facing the early church. Inside, there was dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11) and administrative headaches (Acts 6:1-7). Outside, the church was being pressured by persecution.

While church leaders were careful and sensitive in dealing with the internal problems, there was not much they could do to prevent the external pressures. Through it all, the leaders kept their focus on what was most important—spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How God works them all for good.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

God works in “all things”—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose. Note also that this promise is not for everybody. It can be claimed only by those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

Those who are “called” are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life. They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

Must be confronted in the church

1 Cor. 16:24

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The church at Corinth was a church in trouble. Paul lovingly and forcefully confronted their problems and pointed them back to Christ. He dealt with divisions and conflicts, selfishness, inconsiderate use of freedom, disorder in worship, misuse of spiritual gifts, and wrong attitudes about the resurrection.

In every church, there are enough problems to create tensions and divisions. We should not ignore or gloss over problems in our churches or in our lives. Instead, like Paul, we should deal with problems head on as they arise.

The lesson for us in 1 Corinthians is that unity and love in a church are far more important than leaders and labels.

Galatians 2:2-3

And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

God told Paul, through a revelation, to confer with the church leaders in Jerusalem about the message he was preaching to the Gentiles, so they would understand and approve of what he was doing.

The essence of Paul's message to both Jews and Gentiles was that God's salvation is offered to all people regardless of race, sex, nationality, wealth, social standing, educational level, or anything else. Anyone can be forgiven by trusting in Christ (see Romans 10:8-13).

Even though God had specifically sent him to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16), Paul needed to discuss his gospel message with the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). This meeting prevented a major split in the church, and it formally acknowledged the apostles' approval of Paul's preaching.

Sometimes we avoid conferring with others because we fear that problems or arguments may develop. Instead, we should openly discuss our plans and actions with friends, counselors, and advisers. Good communication helps everyone understand the situation better, it reduces gossip, and it builds unity in the church.

Problems may be a sign of effective living.

1 Tim. 3:1-3

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

To be a church leader ("overseer") is a heavy responsibility because the church belongs to the living God. Church leaders should not be elected because they are popular, nor should they be allowed to push their way to the top. Instead they should be chosen by the church because of their respect for the truth, both in what they believe and in how they live.

God will end all yours in eternity.

Rev. 7:17

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

God will provide for his children's needs in their eternal home where there will be no hunger, thirst, or pain, and he will wipe away all tears. When you are suffering or torn apart by sorrow, take comfort in this promise of complete protection and relief.

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