

"Dealing with Pain"

From the time we're born, we struggle with the problem of pain. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Pain affects us all, but how do we deal with it? That's our subject today.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures give us an assurance, even in the hardest times of life. Suffering is not pleasant for anyone, and questions arise about why we suffer. The Scriptures are not silent about suffering, for God sees and knows everything that happens. The Scriptures reassure us of His compassion when our bodies and our hearts ache. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

We all face suffering. Job 14:1 says, "Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble." He's certainly right. Even if everything seems fine today, we don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow. Proverbs 27:1, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." No one is immune to suffering. Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, "Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all."

Some suffering comes upon us suddenly; it's traumatic and devastating. Other causes of suffering are chronic and unrelenting; they wear us down over time. Those who have faced the cruelty of pain, whether short or long, hurt and they need the comfort and help of God. Some think pain and suffering means God doesn't care, but God knows our pain. Other, others question God's goodness if they suffer pain or loss, but the God of the Bible is the God who loves us enough to send His Son Jesus to suffer for us. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Christ suffered too.

We offer this study free on dealing with pain. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Lamentations 3:21 to 25, and explore how to deal with pain.

Our reading today comes from the book of Lamentations chapter 3 verses 21 to 25. Jeremiah's heart is broken because Jerusalem is destroyed. The temple is torn down. And he speaks of his bitterness and how his soul is down inside of him and it's bowed down. Let's read.

This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I have hope in Him."
The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,
To the person who seeks Him.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh, Father when our souls are bowed down within us help us to look for Your loving kindness and Your mercy and grace. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Where does trouble and pain come from? If you're asking why one hurts and another is spared, we, we can't give a specific reason. We don't know why. Some who endure great pain blame God for all their suffering. Lamentations 3:33 says about God, "for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men." God didn't pick you out of all the earth to intentionally afflict or grieve you with suffering.

The suffering in our world began as a consequence to Adam's sin. God placed thorns and thistles on the earth. God told Adam in Genesis 3:17 to 18, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field." Disease and death has followed humanity since the beginning, and everyone follows the same journey to the grave. There are no exceptions. Romans 5 verse 12 says, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." We're imperfect people, we're vulnerable people living in a world filled with disease and natural disasters. And none of us can expect to be exempt from pain or from death.

Sometimes people ask well, "Why doesn't God stop all sin and suffering?" Well, if He stopped it all, He would stop you too. He would take away your free will and freedom to experience anything that might be a danger. And instead of being a human made in God's image, you'd be a puppet or robot. God knew that giving Adam and Eve freedom meant that they might, of their own will, sin against Him. They sinned and caused untold suffering on all people, even the innocent.

Some of our suffering, sadly, comes from our own making. Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." People tend to deceive themselves about their sins and assume their sins won't hurt anything; but those who sow sinful things reap a bitter harvest. Psalm 7:14 to 16 says, "Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends." People imagine they can do anything they please and don't realize the heavy price they pay for sin. You can't keep on sinning and expect life to bless you with good things. And your life will have a lot of brokenness until that time comes when you change your ways and repent.

Psalm 32 and verse 10 says that "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD." In spite of our sins, God still treats His children better than we deserve. When Ezra recognized all the wickedness of the people of Israel, he observed in Ezra 9:13, "And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved."

God disciplines His people yes, but He does it because He loves them and acts to lead them to a better, be better people. Hebrews 12 verses 5 to 7 says, "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when (you are) reprov'd by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he

receives." For it is for discipline that you have (the ability) to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

Hebrews 12 verses 10 and 11 explains, "For they (speaking of our parents) disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he (God) disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Some suffering comes from the evil deeds that other people commit. Hatred, anger, war, terrorism, greed, lust, power, pride, and selfishness lead people to do unspeakably evil things and cause great suffering to others. Sin is at the foundation of so much fighting and violence. James 4:1 to 2 explains, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel." Paul told the Ephesians elders, "the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me" (Acts 20 verse 23). The apostle Paul suffered much from his enemies for preaching Jesus Christ.

Chronic pain can tempt us to doubt and wonder whether God understands or cares. Hebrews 4:14 to 16 says, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." When you hurting, draw close to God and pray. Now the One who bore the cross knows what pain is.

Some imagine Jesus could not know anything about pain, but that would be a mistaken assumption. Jesus came to earth and experienced all the struggles that we face and more. Philippians 2:6 to 8 says Jesus, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Because He took on flesh, Jesus faced all the physical limitations that we face. He became hungry, thirsted, and weary. When the soldiers scourged Him, He felt great pain. When nails pierced his hands and feet, He suffered and died. Because Jesus himself suffered, He was compassionate with those who suffer. When He saw the sick, he felt compassion and healed them. When he saw the multitude that was downcast and depressed like sheep without a shepherd, He felt compassion for them. When He lost His friend Lazarus, He wept with Mary and Martha.

When you hurt or struggle in life, the Lord knows. What can you do? First, look to Jesus and how He handled suffering. 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 describes how He entrusted Himself to God: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Entrust yourself to God. If you focus on God, you'll take your focus off your suffering and pain. Jesus knew His present sufferings would end, and God would receive Him home. On the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ called out His last words with a loud voice, and He said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23 verse 46). Put yourself into God's hands. He cares for you.

Second, depend on the grace of God. Paul faced a painful problem and prayed to God. And he learned something valuable. He describes his experience in 2 Corinthians 12:7 to 10, "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me (torment me), to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times (he said) I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Suffering causes us to reach out to God, depending on His grace. We all face struggles and challenges bigger than we can handle alone. God's grace doesn't remove every thorn, no, but it does empower us to endure that thorn in our own flesh. God's grace is sufficient, and He can help you!

Third, consider the story of Job. Job suffered so greatly that he cursed the day of his birth and he wished he had died at birth. He lost his children and all his possessions. Satan afflicted him with painful boils from head to toe. His wife told him to "Curse God and die." Even his friends were miserable comforters and said his own sins brought on all his suffering; of course they did not. During all of this, Job could say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (Job 1:21 and 22).

When Job wanted to call God to account for his suffering, God didn't answer him directly; but He did appear to him in a whirlwind and ask Job many questions that Job couldn't answer. God revealed things "too wonderful for" Job, things "which (Job said) I did not know." And even today, we don't know all the reasons why things happen the way they happen. Ultimately, God restored the fortunes of Job. He blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. You too have another chapter in your life beyond this one. Don't despair; hope in God.

Fourth, according to Galatians 1 and verse 4, Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Jesus rescues people by forgiving sins and transforming lives. People can die to the old life of sin and live for righteousness. God's grace leads us to be zealous for good works. God comforts and teaches us how to comfort others. Many Christians who struggle with pain and problems spend then their lives helping others to cope with pain and problems, because of the love of God. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The heart of Christ is big not small. He teaches us in Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." And christians have done so throughout their history, and they care for those who hurt.

The love of Christ has built thousands of hospitals, children's homes, homes for seniors, and counseling centers. The love of Christ has moved churches and Christians to help families with their problems, to help the addicted, and to minister to prisoners. They've done a thousand other things to bless all people. Galatians 6:10 says, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Yes, our sorrows are not so big when we're helping other people.

Let's pray together. Oh, Father we're thankful that by Your love and grace You have helped us through our struggles and our hurts and the pain that we suffer. We pray that we may always entrust ourselves to You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

When we're hurting, let's keep our faith. The more we study God's word, the stronger our faith will become. The more we look to Jesus, fixing our hope on Him, the more we can cope with the struggles of life. Hebrews 12:1 and 2 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

When we suffer, let's look to the joy set before us. Suffering will not keep us out of heaven, unless we give up on God. There's great joy for the person who loves God in heaven. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." We need Christ to save us and help us.

To be right with Christ, place your faith in Him, turn from the evil of sin to righteousness in repentance, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. At the time of baptism, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16), give you newness of life (Romans 6:4), make you His child (Galatians 3:26 to 27), and add you to His church (Acts 2:47). Hold fast to the Lord throughout life; never give up on God. God wants you to be saved and to live in heaven with Him forever.

We hope that today's study about dealing with pain has encouraged you to hold fast to God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

There's no better day than today to get your life back on track by going to church. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. Why not worship with them? If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about our program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.