

"When Your Heart Breaks"

When our hearts break, we wonder, "Does God really love us?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore the love of God and the value of suffering. Stay with us.

Welcome to "In Search of the Lord's Way." We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. The Bible reveals God's love in good times and in bad. He hears every prayer and knows every struggle we face. He gives us His Word to teach us, to comfort us, and to guide us through the rough times. You'll never face a problem someone hasn't faced before, and the Scriptures give us an amazing resource to see how others have handled their struggles. God knew what we needed even before we had a need and He gave us this marvelous book to help us. The Bible says in Psalm 119 verse 50, "This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me." We're so happy that you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Annie Johnson Flint was crippled and twisted much of her life with arthritis; and yet from her pain, from the problems she suffered she developed a sensitivity to suffering that helped her to understand and to encourage others who also were suffering. She wrote these words of encouragement: "God hath not promised skies always blue, Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through; God hath not promised sun without rain, Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain. But God hath promised strength for the day, Rest for the labor, light for the way, Grace for the trials, help from above, Unfailing sympathy, undying love."

As Christians, we shouldn't expect God will prevent every problem. People say well, "If God loved us, He wouldn't let us suffer." But those who say such things may be speaking too quickly and may not understand. God may be using a difficulty to produce a greater good. Heartaches teach us the most important lessons. The Bible says in Psalm 119 verse 75, "I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." The heartaches of life may bring us the greatest good.

You might want to know more about this topic, so we offer a printed copy of our study, 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 stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org and on Y-Tube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Corinthians 1:3 to 5, and explore God's comfort.

Our reading today comes from 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 to 5.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

What a wonderful God we have who helps us even in the hardest times of life. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your love and for Your comfort in our afflictions. Help us Father to be like You and to comfort others. And to always do Your will. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 7 verses 2 to 4 that, "It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure."

It's an assumption that the best life is one free from pain. Life free from difficulty is rare, and what seems hard and painful may be what's best for us. I recently received a letter from a prisoner, thanking God that he was imprisoned. Why? Because he found salvation and a better life in prison. He would never have looked for it in the free world. A jail cell and a hospital bed have often led many to change their lives for the better. The psalmist said in Psalm 119 verse 71, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes." When your heart aches, life hurts all over. But if suffering has value and can lead to good in a person's life, then we might think of God very differently. Well how is suffering good? Well let me suggest these things:

First, some "good things" can only be brought about in our character by suffering. The pearl, for instances, comes not through ease but suffering. A pearl forms when an irritant, such as a piece of sand, works its way into a particular species of oyster or clam. Now as a defense mechanism, the oyster secretes a fluid to coat the irritant. Layer upon layer of this coating is deposited on the irritant until a lustrous pearl is formed. If there were no irritant, there could be no pearl.

Suffering can help a person know himself, what his character is, and that God can help him endure whatever comes along. Suffering will not only strengthen him; it'll also give him confidence to face the future. Romans 5 and verse 4 says that trials bring about endurance; "and endurance produces character; and character produces hope." When God has helped us through one trial, we have confidence that He'll help us through whatever comes our way.

Paul spoke confidently in Romans 8:28. He said, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Now not all things are good, but God causes all things (good or bad) to work together for good for those who love Him. God can take the heartaches of our lives and use them for some greater good. We may not always know what He'll do with them, but we can trust that He will use those experiences to bring about good.

Second, suffering can help a person find what is important or valuable. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word." An affliction is something that causes great physical or mental distress. It usually comes through no fault of your own. It can, however, wake us up to what really matters.

You know it's easy to place our priorities out of balance, to emphasize the things that don't matter. Suffering is painful, but it helps us to see what truly matters. Having a flat-screen television isn't nearly as important as being able to see or being able to read the Bible. What really matters in life is whether we're spiritually and physically healthy. The apostle John greeted Gaius this way in 3 John 2, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

The older I grow the more I realize how important my relationship with God is. When we're loneliest, we most value the presence of God our Father in our lives. With the breakdown of the home so prevalent, many individuals are terribly lonely. The number of single adults in America outnumber the married adults.

The Lord Jesus understood loneliness. He never had a wife or children. And Isaiah 53 and verse 3 says that, "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." When He needed His disciples most, at Gethsemane they weren't there for Him. You remember they slept while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. One then betrayed Him, another denied Him three times, and the others scattered. Jesus went to the cross alone and suffered for our sins alone.

Where did Jesus find His strength? Well, the Lord said in John 16:32, “Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” He stayed close to His Father, and that closeness sustained Him through the hard and lonely times. The Bible says in James 4:7 to 8, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Likewise, Paul drew strength from the Lord. He said in 2 Timothy 4:16 to 18, “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Third, suffering teaches us to be thankful for our blessings. A truly hungry person is thankful for something to eat. He’s not picky and he won’t complain. People who have an abundance are often the first to complain when things aren’t perfect. Philippians 2:14 says, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.” Ephesians 5 and verse 20 instructs us, “always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”

Someone says, “What do you mean giving thanks for all things? How can I give thanks for this trouble and heartache that I’m going through? Yes, it’s stressful, and painful, and discouraging.” I know it’s difficult and harsh. When you can’t change your circumstances, you can change how you see things. If all you see is the pain, you may forget what God is able to do with that trouble that you’re facing. The Bible says in James 1 verses 2 to 4, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

In Acts 5 the apostles were preaching Jesus in the temple. The high priest and the Council heard of it and locked them up. An angel of the Lord freed them and told them to go back to the temple and preach, and they did. The guards arrested them a second time; and the Council rebuked them, and beat them, and told them not to preach in the name of Jesus any more. The Jews usually flogged people with whips or rods. They would hit them repeatedly up to 39 times. The Sanhedrin Council that condemned Jesus meant business with this beating. And it must have been quite painful.

But Acts 5:41 to 42 says, “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” They saw their suffering as one way to show love and devotion to God.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:12 to 16, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you’re reviled for the name of Christ, you’re blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” Perspective matters, and if we see our suffering as a way of showing our devotion, we can rejoice even when we suffer.

Fourth, suffering can teach us compassion for the needs of others. Walking through some difficult experience is rough, but it helps us understand what other people who suffer a similar problem are going through. We’ve been there, and we know what it’s like. And God may be using that heartache to

equip us to help someone else who may not be as strong as we are and cannot endure it as well. God's comfort trains us to be a comfort for others.

As we read, 2 Corinthians 1:3 to 5 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."

We all need the blessing of someone who understands, someone who can help us work through our struggles, and someone who will pick us up when we stumble. Mistakes and suffering teach valuable lessons, equipping us with the understanding and the compassion necessary to help someone else through a struggle that we have endured. Suffering teaches us the value of kindness in word, a thought or a deed. When we learn the value of receiving kindness, we know how valuable it is to give kindness.

Fifth, suffering can open our hearts and it can give us the value of prayer and Bible study. Suffering reminds us of God. Some people never think about God until some great need comes in their lives. But it's a great day when we realize how much we need God all the time. We need Him in good times as well as in bad. And it's just as important to understand God is listening to our prayers in one situation as it is another. The psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:153, "Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law."

During the Civil War a friend of Abraham Lincoln was a visitor to the White House. And the visitor said, "One night I was restless and could not sleep. . . From the private room where the President slept, I heard low tones. Instinctively I wandered in, and there I saw a sight which I have never forgotten. It was the President kneeling before an open Bible. His back was toward me. I shall never forget his prayer: "Oh, Thou God that heard Solomon in the night when he prayed and cried for wisdom, hear me. . . . I cannot guide the affairs of this nation without Thy help. Hear me and save this nation.'" Lincoln knew how much he needed God. Do you?

The psalmist said in Psalm 119:143, "Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight." When your heart aches, go to the Word of God. Read God's promises of love, and help, and support to His children. God's promises hold true. You can lose your job, your health, your security, or your friends; but don't ever let go of your God or His promises. Stay close to God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You hear our prayers and that You love us so much. And give us the encouragement and the comfort that we need when our hearts ache. And Father we pray that You will continue to be with us. And help us to stay close to You and to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

We wonder if God really loved us, why does He let us suffer. But love is more involved than merely keeping people from pain. You know some pain is necessary in life. We couldn't survive without some pain. It's our pain and anguish that teach us necessary lessons and make us want to change.

Much of our heartaches come from sin, sometimes the sins of others and sometimes our own. The pain of sin makes us long for righteousness. And bearing the consequences of our sins helps us to understand why sin is so terrible. God doesn't hate sin because He's mean and hateful. He hates sin because He knows how sin ruins the lives of people that He loves.

2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says that, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." God doesn't

want anyone to be lost in sin; He wants people to change their lives and come to the Lord. Now your struggle today may be the motivation that you need to change your life.

To become a Christian, trust in the Lord with all your heart. God is utterly trustworthy. Turn from your sins. And sin will only lead to more heartache and ruin. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And be baptized. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Romans 6:3 to 7 teaches baptism unites us with Christ. And in baptism we are buried and raised with Christ. And baptism is the time when the old man of sin is crucified with Christ and we begin to walk in newness of life free from sin. Won't you do that today!

We hope our look into the values of suffering has challenged you to think. If you want a free printed copy 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. We also have a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now SEARCH is on YouTube as well! So subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs you watch; this helps us spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Because everybody needs a church family. Now I realize some of you for health reasons can't attend worship; but I'm speaking to those who can. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. and God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.