

"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." Today we're going to explore the value of pain. Is that intriguing? Well, stay with us.

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and 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 that 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; and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Annie Johnson Flint was crippled and twisted much of her life with arthritis, yet from her pain, she developed a sensitivity to suffering that helped her to understand and encourage others who 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 to 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. They may not understand. God may be using a difficulty now to produce a greater good. Heartaches teach us the most important lessons of life. 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 free printed copy or CD of our study. So mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, Post Office, Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number; and that number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org. Well, the Edmond church will now worship in song; we'll read from 2 Corinthians 1:3 to 5, and we'll think on God's comfort.

Our Scripture 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 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." This is from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful for Your Word and for Your comfort in all of our times of affliction. Help us to stay focused on serving You and loving You even through the difficult times. In Jesus' name, 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. (You see) 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."

You know, it's an assumption that the best life is one free from pain or distress. But 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. Well, 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 a person to change their lives for the better. The psalmist said in Psalm 119, verse 71 that, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes." When you 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 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. Well, as a defense mechanism, the oyster then 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 will 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 helped us through one trial, we have confidence that He will help us through whatever comes our way.

Paul spoke confidently in Romans 8 and verse 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 purposes." Now not all things are good, but God causes all things (good and 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 will do with them, but we can trust that He will use those experiences to bring about good.

Second, suffering can help a person learn what is really important or valuable. The psalmist said in Psalm 119, verse 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.

It is very easy to get our priorities and our lives out of balance, to put such high emphasis on things that don't matter. Now, suffering is painful, but one thing it does is it helps us to see what really does matter in this life. Having an HD TV 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, verse 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. It's when we're lonely that we most value the presence of God our Father in our lives. With the breakdown of the home so prevalent in our society, many individuals are terribly lonely. The number of single adults in America has greatly increased.

The Lord Jesus understood loneliness. He never had a wife or children. Isaiah 53 and verse 3 says, "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, they didn't help Him. They slept while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. One betrayed Him, another denied Him three times, the others scattered. Jesus went to the cross alone and suffered for our sins alone.

Where did Jesus find His strength? The Lord said in John 16 and verse 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.” Jesus stayed close to His Father, and that closeness sustained Him through the hard and lonely times. The Bible says in James 4, verses 7 and 8, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (But) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Likewise Paul drew His strength from the Father. He said in 2 Timothy 4, verses 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 won’t complain. People who have an abundance are often the first to complain when things aren’t perfect. Philippians 2, verse 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, “Well, what do you mean giving thanks for all things? How can I give thanks for this trouble and heartache that I’m going through? It is stressful, painful, and discouraging.” Well, I know it’s difficult and harsh. When you can’t change your circumstances, however, you can change how you see things. If all you can see is the pain, you may be forgetting 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 chapter 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. Well, the guards then arrested them a second time; the Council rebuked them, beat them, and told them not to preach in the name of Jesus any more. Well, 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 towards the apostles with this beating; and it must have been quite painful.

But Acts 5, verses 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.” You see, they saw their suffering as a way to show love and devotion to God.

The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 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 are reviled for the name of Christ, you are 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, yes. 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 they can't endure it maybe as well as we can. God's comfort trains us to be a comfort for others.

And so the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1:3 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, (yes) so also our comfort is abundant through Christ." That is true, too!

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've endured ourselves. Suffering teaches us the value of kindness in word, thought, and in deed. We learn what it is to receive a kindness and how valuable it is to give a kindness.

Fifth, suffering can teach us the value of prayer and of Bible study. Suffering reminds us of God. Some never think about God until some great need comes into their lives. Oh, it's a great day when we come to realize that we need God. We need Him in the good times and in bad. And it's just as important to understand God in those good times as it is in the bad; and to understand that He is always listening to our prayers. The psalmist prayed in Psalm 119, verse 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 at the White House. "One night (he said) I was restless and could not sleep. . . And 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, verse 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; read His support and His help for His children. God's promises hold true. You can lose your job; you can lose your health; you can lose 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. O Father, may our love for You grow more and more in good times and in bad. And help us to stay close to You 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 free from pain. 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. 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.

Second Peter 3 and verse 9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards 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, because 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, verses 3 to 7 teaches that baptism unites us with Christ. And in baptism we're buried and raised with Christ. Baptism is the time when that old man of sin is crucified with Christ and we begin to walk in newness of life free from sin. Oh, my friend, won't you do that today?

We hope and pray that our look into the values of suffering has challenged you to think and to draw closer to God. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, Post Office 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, our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. And we offer Bible correspondence courses that will help you learn more about God's will for your life, and a lot of people have been asking for them recently. And if you would like to have one, just let us know. We also offer free study sheets that go along with our programs. You can download them free at our website before each program or call and request them. We never ask for money for these materials.

Please worship with a church of Christ in your area. They're the reason we don't ask for money because they support us and help us. And if you are looking for a good church home, one that is sound and one that loves the Lord, we'll be happy to help you find a sound congregation. Churches of Christ love their guests and they want guests, and if you go and worship with them you'll be glad you attended. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So please let us know that you're watching Search and tell a friend about us. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.