

# **Pains and Sorrows in the Life of a Hurting Adult!**

*Pain seems to be part of the job  
requirement for parents and spouses.*

*How should you respond to hurts?*

*How to overcome and have the wonderful spoils of victory.*

*How God uses brokenness in our lives!*

*Christ is our Victor... how to experience joy in  
the cup of suffering!*

***Studies -- messages by***

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## **PREFACE**

### ***Pain seems to be part of the job requirement for parents and spouses.***

- Parenthood begins with the gripping pain of labor and delivery.
- Then in the most incredible example of empathy imaginable, mothers and fathers vicariously experience every pain and hurt their children face -- from scraped knees and bloody noses to disease and sometimes even death.
- As their offspring grow, parents suffer the agony of watching and letting them blunder through the initial stages of independence.
- And those parents who survive the physical and emotional cuts and bruises of childhood and adolescence feel another kind of pain when they finally accept their child's adulthood and see their grown-up child step out on his or her own. **All these pains are normal; they come with the territory of parenthood.**

#### **And there are Other PAINS that Parents so Often Experience:**

*I am convinced the hurting parent problem is common to every church and community. There are the young parents who have a young teen beginning to rebel against their leadership and authority. There are the hurting senior-citizen parents whose non-Christian middle-aged children still give them much cause for sadness and concern. **Then parental doubt and hurt is always there.***

1. Parents can work hard to build family unity on a firm foundation of Christian faith and to teach their families love and obedience toward God.... to have it all lost.
2. These parents are crushed when one of their children casts off those families ties.
3. They are heartbroken when a son rejects some or all of the Christian values or standards of living they labored so hard to instill.
4. Or they are devastated when a daughter abandons the Christian faith they always tried to teach and live.
5. The hurt may set in when a son runs away from home without leaving any word of explanation or -- when a sobbing fifteen-year-old daughter admits her pregnancy.
6. The pain may be with a child's involvement in a non-Christian lifestyle -- drugs, a strange religious cult, or living together before marriage, etc.
7. A high schooler may resist going to church with claims of boredom or lack of relevance.

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

8. An under-grad exposed to the new intellectual atmosphere of college may question or even feel he has outgrown his parents' beliefs.
9. The hurt could be prompted by something as shocking as an announcement of homosexuality or as gradual and common as a case of a growing teens' rebellion.

### ***Sometimes It is a Deep Hurt Between Spouses, to This Subject, We Also Want to Speak!***

All the following sections deal with both aspects faced in our homes -- the sorrows that abound from youth who have gone astray and the devastation that comes from spouses who have lost their way. Loving intimacy is gone, and bitterness, anger, and frustration often reigns!!

Into the this scene comes the need of brokenness. God puts a great premium on brokenness. The Word says that "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" (See Psa. 57:17; Psa. 34:18) Indeed God calls us to a humble, contrite heart, a broken spirit wherein we have a true estimate of ourselves and see the sinful, wicked heart for what it really is.

Possibly much of the time, in the midst of hurts and burdens that come from parenting, our Heavenly Father is endeavoring to bring us to a place of humble brokenness in His presence that He might be bless us.

The last section are a few sermon notes that bring encouragement, help, direction and a realization of all that we have in Christ. He is indeed the afflicted One who knows how to comfort us in our affliction. He was a "*man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, afflicted, smitten or God....*" See Isaiah 53. He is indeed touched with even the feelings of our infirmities, and as our High Priest is there is strengthen, stablish, and settle us. (I Peter 5:10) Christ is indeed our wounded Healer!

### ***God's Word Has Answers, Heed Them!***

***--Dr. Edward Watke Jr.***

## **Contents:**

### **Part One: “WHEN HURTS COME... WHAT SHALL WE DO?”**

What Shall We Do? Give Rejection?	pg. 6
Give Acceptance?	pg. 7
Give Anger?	pg. 7
Give Unconditional Love?	pg. 8
Experience Guilt?	pg. 9
Give Forgiveness?	pg. 10
Experience Despair?	pg. 11
Know Blessed Hope?	pg. 11

### **Part Two: “GOD VALUES BROKEN THINGS!”**

Conversion is a Form of Brokenness	pg. 13
Elements of True Brokenness	pg. 14
Repentance, Confession, Apology	pg. 14
Making Restitution	pg. 14
Having a Forgiving Spirit	pg. 15
Enduring Wrong Without Retaliating	pg. 16
Repaying Evil With Good	pg. 16
Honoring Others Above Ourselves	pg. 17
Giving Prompt Obedience	pg. 17
Death to Public Opinion	pg. 17
Confessing Others’ Sins as Our Own	pg. 16

***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

Keeping One's Cool in the Crisis    pg. 18

What Brokenness Does Not Mean!    pg. 19

**Part Three: "MESSAGES OF COMFORT!"**

The Cup of Suffering... Jesus Drank for Us!    pgs. 20 - 23

God's Answer For Our Personal Adversity!    pgs. 24 - 25

Strength In the Midst of Weakness!    pgs. 26 - 28

Facing the Disappointments of Life!    pgs. 29 -32

Christ, the Wounded Healer!    pgs. 33 - 36

**Part One**

**When Hurts Come, What Shall We Do?**

**There are the common Feelings of Isolation!**

*Bitter shame hath spoiled the sweet world's taste,  
That it yields naught but shame and bitterness.*

-- Shakespeare,

**Many hurting spouses and parents have talked about the isolation of shame.**

1. Their reasons have varied from adult children whose drug-dealings made state-wide headlines . . . to a high school freshman's conspicuous absence from his parents' pew on Sunday morning because he was bored with church.
2. **In isolation, parents have felt embarrassment, inferiority, humiliation, incompetence, disgrace, and loss of face.** Sometimes it is because of the conflict between the two of them in their marriage or over their children.
3. Often they have expressed fear of rejection, disrespect, disapproval, contempt, and even pity from the people around them who witness their struggles.

**What will it be, how will we react??**

**Isolation or fellowship?**

**Rejection or Acceptance??**

**Anger or Unconditional love?**

**Guilt or forgiveness??**

**Despair or Hope??**

**Rejection?** (Heb. 13:5-6; Jh. 6:37; II Tim. 2:13; Jh. 15:16)

1. Webster says **reject** means "to cast off" or "to spew out." "To refuse to accept or to consider."
2. Rejection is a determined action, an **active cutting off**.
3. It can take a **passive form**... rejection can occur also when a parent withdraws from or withholds something from his or her relationships with a child or spouse. Most of us are guilty of this, at least occasionally.
4. Passive rejection can also result when the adult withholds affirmation or encouragement from others.
5. It can be the withholding of something from a relationship or the **refusal to accept or consider**. This is widely practiced by hurting Christian parents.
6. Rejection can be a form of **retaliation** for hurting or humiliation. Christian parents are human; sometimes when they **feel deeply wounded and rejected themselves, they may instinctively strike back with rejection and feel justified in doing so, either toward a spouse or child.**

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

7. Rejection is a powerful force! But its power is negative. ***Rejection tears apart, reinforces walls, separates, and wounds.***

**Illustrations:** Consider David and Absalom, or David and King Saul.

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**Acceptance?** (Rom. 15:7, 14:1; Phile. 17; Eph. 1:6)

1. There is another force even more powerful than rejection; it is a positive force which draws together, unifies, knocks down barriers, and heals wounds. ***It is acceptance.***
  2. One problem is that most Christian parents confuse acceptance with approval. Parents often see acceptance as a negative stance, a surrender of principle, a resigned defeat... ***that is not what acceptance means when it is Biblical.***
  3. We are to distinguish between a spouse, son or daughter who ***has a problem*** and a spouse, son or daughter who ***is a problem***. *This kind of aggressive acceptance can embrace the person without condoning action or behavior.*
  4. It might help to think of acceptance in terms of a related idea that is also the opposite of rejection -- reception. ***It can soften, melt, heal, and soothe another!***
  5. A strong sense of ***disappointment*** is one of the most common hindrances to acceptance. We usually have high expectations and dreams for our spouse or child. (As we rear youth and watch them grow, we can't help dreaming of the mark they will someday make for God and maybe even for us and our families.)
  6. ***Fear can also make acceptance difficult.*** We feel so helpless as we watch our children test the thin ice of independence and the even thinner ice of rebellion.
  7. Acceptance takes extra effort when a hurting parent or spouse ***feels manipulated or tested.*** In such cases, little things, minor irritations and our response to them can be as great a barometer of our acceptance as the major problems and differences.
  8. Any sort of neutral or unexpressed acceptance may be ***misread as rejection*** by a sensitive loved one.
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### **Anger?**

1. The inability to change the behavior of a wayward child (or angry spouse) gives a parent a helpless feeling that agitates those fears seething inside. ***At times, then the parent or spouse is primed to explode.***
2. ***Anger is the instinctive human response to fear, pain, or frustration*** (among other things). Most of us have experienced a measure of all three.
3. Any parent has reason to ***fear*** for his or her children's protection. Christian parents experience the added fear of losing a son or daughter for eternity.
4. Anger that results from hurt is perhaps the easiest to understand. ***Every hurting spouse or parent knows pain;*** and that feeling of personal pain can often cause an angry reaction.

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

5. ***Frustration***, the third prompter of anger, is another feeling hurting adults know a lot about.
  6. Besides this, hurting Christian parents experience other disappointments-- there is the frustration of having children ***discount our views*** in favor of their peers' ideas, of having our children ***ignore our warnings*** of danger, of ***watching them waste time and even a life*** -- feeling helpless to do anything about it all the while. *(These same feelings can be there, in a measure, toward our spouses for various reasons.)*
  7. Much anger felt by hurting adults is not expressed at all. ***It is hidden, or suppressed because of guilt.*** Yet as a smoldering, muzzled emotion, this inner anger is no less real.
  8. ***Open expressions of anger have another danger -- they cause callousness.*** Every shouting match, every disciplinary decision spurred by anger, every angry bout with our spouse inflicts another wound.
  9. ***And every new wound heals over with a tougher scar tissue.*** Each time the combatants have to get a little angrier, probe a little deeper, scream a little louder, hit a little harder to make the same impact. ***How sad!***
  10. Vented anger always flames hostility, resentment and bitterness.
  11. Unexpressed anger can be just as harmful. ***It is hidden malignancy that may grow into hatred if it isn't dealt with,*** I expect most would protest, *"I couldn't hate one of my children or I couldn't hate my mate."* But you could if you harbor angry feelings for any length of time.
  12. It is good therapy to admit our anger to someone else, our spouse, or someone who will help us deal with our anger. ***We need to get biblical counseling NOW!***
  13. ***When we do misuse our anger, when we direct it at the personhood of our children or mate*** instead at their behavior, we will also feel a great amount of ***guilt*** on our part. ***Such guilt should prompt us to ask for forgiveness from God and from our children.***
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### **Unconditional Love?**

1. The most powerful resource hurting Christian adults can use is the ***resource of divine love-- unconditional love.***
2. Unconditional love given freely, actively, can work miracles in the life of the recipient.
3. Verbalizing love has its impact, but it does not have the impact that unconditional love can have on a life.
4. Many hurting Christian parents never get down to acting out their love because they are hung up with guilt over the fact ***they don't always feel the love they know should be there. Maybe spouse to spouse we feel the same way!***
5. Unconditional love is not always an overwhelming, uncontrollable feeling. ***It is***



***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?  
far more than just an emotional or a heartfelt warmth.***

6. Unconditional love is a conscious choice. Feelings may sag, it may be mostly resolve to love no matter what. ***It is a matter of mind and will as well as the heart.***

**How will unconditional love be shown?**

1. ***Patience:*** Sometimes not acting is an act of love. Patience is the normal attitude of love; passive love waiting on God to act. Love waiting to begin; not in a hurry, calm; ready to do its work when the summons comes.
2. ***Kindness:*** If patience is love waiting, kindness is love active. It is the most obvious, and effective expression of love.
3. ***Humility:*** There is a great temptation for adults to use love to appeal to their children or spouse in order to manipulate them into conformity or guilt. The martyrdom routine says this: *“Look how much I’m willing to do for you in spite of the way you’ve treated me.”*
4. ***Courtesy:*** *“Love does not behave itself unseemly”* is the way Paul put it. ***But, so often courtesy breaks down in the home.*** Parents often interrupt a son or daughter to get their own opinion stated. We often don’t devote full attention when our mate or children talk or extend them the courtesy of hearing them out. We even correct and sometimes criticize them in front of guests in our home. In summary, we can too easily shed our manners like wet boots when we cross the threshold of our own homes.
5. ***Good temper:*** The Corinthian letter says love *“is not easily provoked.”* It does not keep a record of wrongs. The feelings of ill-temper that plagues hurting Christian adults has to be flushed out and kept out by an overflowing spirit of good-tempered love. . . ***God’s love, an unconditional love.***

**Consider Ephesians 3:17-19**

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**Guilt?**

1. Each hurting Christian parent or spouse wrestles with his or her own measure of guilt. But there are no more perfect parents than there are perfect people.
2. The more we remember, the more we wonder if our shortcomings could be to blame for the problems of our children and/or our spouses.
3. Our guilt often churns up memories of inconsistencies in our own spiritual lives. And we must deal with them. Guilt works like an inescapable video-tape machine that refuses to forget the mistakes we have made as parents or mates. It plays them over and over again in our minds, in slow motion and from every conceivable angle.
4. All of us look back over our years of parenthood and marriage and find real, justified reasons for our guilt. Much of it can be false guilt, there not because we necessarily failed, but others made choices we endeavored to encourage them not to make.
5. There is a time we have to **let go and relinquish our feeling of responsibility**

## **What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?**

for a child's or spouse's decisions and behavior.

6. Guilt can be there because others heap guilt upon the parent by offering simplistic suggestions, making uninformed judgments or in some other way unintentionally imply parental blame. The hurt and damage can be great.
  7. Sometimes it is: *Feelings of guilt, more introspection, more possible reasons for guilt, more feelings of guilt, more introspection, more possible reasons for guilt . . . on and on . . . and it becomes a vicious whirlpool which sucks a parent or a spouse deeper and deeper.*
  8. Parents may react to all this with much self-pity. Or another common defense mechanism of hurting parents, who feel guilty, is to attempt to transmit some of that guilt to the child by direct accusations or by acting the martyr. ***This is serious for the child probably has much guilt of his own and may well be drowning in his guilt. (Or we respond this same way toward our spouse!)***
  9. The only effective means of dealing with guilt is to **recognize it, face it, confess where wrong, seek forgiveness, and put the guilt under the blood of Christ.** God's perfect love casts out fear... fear has torment, and being made perfect in love we can experience the removal of fears and all that goes with guilt. (See I John 4:17-18; I John 1:7-9; Psalm 51 and Psalm 32.)
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## **Forgiveness?**

1. Our relief from guilt we discussed earlier is directly related to our own attitudes of forgiveness.
2. One of God's characteristics we need to consider is His generosity, ***His extravagant forgiveness.*** Not only are we assured of I John 1:9, but forgiveness is available for the asking ***with no behavioral prerequisites.***
3. Far from being extravagant, the tendency of many hurting adults is to be ***stingy with forgiveness.*** . . . it is based on. . . *"If he (or she) would only . . . . " ***We place behavioral conditions on our forgiveness.****
4. We too often content ourselves with our inner feelings of forgiveness and load all the responsibility for reconciliation onto our children or our spouse. God does not do it that way. ***He holds out His forgiveness and waits for it to be accepted.***
5. ***Another trait of God's forgiveness is that it is all-encompassing.*** The forgiveness is the same, no matter what the sin. . . ***He completely, willingly forgives all sin we are willing to confess.*** (I Jh. 1:7-9; Isa. 44:22; 43:25; 1:18; Prov. 28:13)
6. Forgiveness starts not as an emotion, but a deliberate **act of the will.** Looking for a *relieved, comfortable feeling that all will turn out right* is not forgiveness.
7. Another requirement of forgiveness is a willingness to accept our share of the responsibility.
8. Forgiveness must also be shown, obviously, by hurting adults. ***In fact, acceptance and unconditional love are two good indications of forgiveness.*** All three attitudes are inseparably intertwined.

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

9. Forgiveness is not easy. Often it is very costly for **we must totally release the person from guilt**, and also have a **change of attitude from resentment to acceptance**.
  10. **Hurting parents must forgive their spouses, their children and accept God's love.** Resentments can spring up and grow, these hard feelings must be put away.
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### **Despair?**

1. Many hurting adults come to the place of total despair. How sad! ***The dictionary defines despair as a "loss of confidence, an absence of expectation or hope."*** The word perfectly describes the reaction of many hurting Christians.
  2. Despair becomes the logical outgrowth of any or all of the common negative reactions hurting Christians experience. ***Dwelling on attitudes of shame, rejection, anger, or guilt is as dangerous as clinging to a log in the upper Niagara River.*** Eventually those emotions will drag us over the precipice and we will plunge into despair.
  3. The first big contributor is the ***sinking sensation of helplessness and inadequacy. But GOD is adequate!***
  4. Every profession in the world has a training system combining -- education, apprenticeship and on-the-job-training experience . . . **except the most important jobs in the world . . . being a spouse and a parent.** None of us are fully prepared for either.
  5. Helplessness also often results from a sense of distance both emotionally and geographically.
  6. Another factor that adds to parental despair ***is the gravity of a spouse's, son's or daughter's actions.***
  7. For some it is a great disappointment with God that brings much of the despair. The adult feels that God has not kept His promises. He did not intervene; He did not act on their prayers. They forget that God still operates on the basis of man's free will and right of choice.
  8. Many become discouraged for things don't change. Many feel things should have changed many years ago. The lack of resolution, the discovery that the longer we hurt, the weaker our grip on hope, all brings people to deeper despair.
  9. **The answer for the Christian is God's Word, His grace, mercy and love.** One must study Isa. 40:28-31; 41:10; chapters 42, 43, 62, 63 of Psalms and many other portions that set forth God's great love, providential working and care. **HE IS AT WORK!** (Read Esther)
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### **Hope... waiting on Him?**

1. The first and great assurance which should be especially heartening when we begin to feel completely helpless as hurting adults is this: **God's ability to work in the lives of those we love doesn't depend on our resources.**

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

2. In fact, God is not completely free to work in the life of our loved one until ***we let go and leave him or her entirely in God's hands.*** (I Cor. 5:4-5) We must be willing to release the person into God's will and plan.
3. Something unexplainable and miraculous can happen when we trust God by faith and when we get desperate enough to release others, to entrust them totally to God. ***We are to do the releasing in the right spirit, in the loving spirit of Christ!*** This does not exempt us from further concern, but it lays the responsibility for change on God. It keeps out of His way and frees us from worry and manipulation.
4. Releasing our children (or spouse) to God as hurting parents allows us to concentrate on the only requirements God places on us -- ***forgiving, accepting, and loving our own.*** I am stating this for a parent whose child is grown or nearly gone from home and not under their directive care and discipline.
5. There isn't a situation in the world that God cannot use for His glory and bring forth the promises of Isaiah 61:1-4. What seems like hopeless circumstances are not hopeless with God. ***In fact, all things are possible with God.***
6. Whether we see God at work or not is not the question, God is often working in the worst of circumstances and we are not aware of what is taking place. Consider the book of Esther and God's special intervention in Daniel's life. ***We must wait upon Him.*** (Psa. 27:14)
7. ***We may not always see God's design being woven into the fabric of our loved ones lives.*** But if we have committed our children and spouse to God and have covenanted with Him to do our part, we can rest assured God will never stop weaving and working His message into their hearts. (Jere. 33:3)
8. When the years of concern and hurt drag on and on, and our hope begins to shrivel, ***we need to be reminded that God is oblivious to time.***
  - He isn't bound by the structure of our days and months and years.
  - God sees the forever past and the forever future; He is not in a hurry.
  - We get impatient and frustrated in our limited perception of time.
  - ***We forget every person's spiritual pilgrimage is a unique and unending process;*** we seem to feel more comfortable when we can set up check points along the way.
9. ***God is the God of the second chance.*** (and third and fourth chance) He can and will take our saved loved ones wherever they are, whatever their sins, however poorly they have lived their lives, and give them a fresh start.
10. Often God will help them salvage their past by building on and using those very experiences that have caused us so much pain.
11. ***Our God is a persistent God!*** Because He is eternal; He knows no finality. ***He never quits? He never gives up. . . knowing that should give us enough faith and hope to keep doing our part as Christians. . . as we wait on Him.***

## **Part Two**

# *What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?* **God Values Broken Things**

## ***Introductory Thoughts***

Usually when something is broken, its value declines or disappears altogether. Broken dishes, broken bottles, broken mirrors are generally scrapped. Even a crack in furniture or a tear in cloth greatly reduces its resale value. But it isn't that way in the spiritual realm. God puts a premium on broken things -- especially on broken people. That is why we read such verses as:

*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.* (Psalm 34:18)

*The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* (Psalm 51:17)

God knows how to resist the proud and haughty, but He cannot resist a person who is humble and contrite.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6) There is some thing in our brokenness that appeals to His compassion and power. And so, part of His wonderful purpose for our lives is that we should be broken -- broken in heart, broken in spirit, and maybe broken even in body. (II Corinthians 4:6-18)

## ***Conversion is a Form of Brokenness***

1. We are introduced to the breaking process prior to our conversion when the Holy Spirit begins His work of convicting us of sin.
2. He must get us to the place where we are willing to confess we are lost, unworthy, deserving only of hell.
3. We probably fight every step of the way. But He continues to wrestle with us until our pride is shattered, our boasting tongue is silenced and all resistance is gone.
4. Lying at the foot of the Cross, we finally whisper, "*Lord Jesus, save me.*" The will has been broken, the sinner has been mastered, the heart has been made aware of its wretched sinfulness and lustfulness.

**An Illustration of this is an unbroken colt:** *By nature the colt is a wild, lawless creature. At the merest suggestion of a bridle or a saddle, it will rear, bolt, leap and kick. It may be a beautiful, well-proportioned animal, but as long as it is unbroken, it is useless as far as service is concerned. Then comes the painful, prolonged process of bending the colt's will so that it will submit to the harness. Once the colt's will has been conquered by a higher will, the animal finds the real reason for its existence.* ("Tis true of us as well.)

**An illustration from Matthew 11:28-30:** Christ may have made wooden yokes. Someone has beautifully suggested that if there had been a sign over the door of His shop, it probably would have read, "*My yokes fit well.*" But the point for us is that our divine Lord is still a yoke maker. He says, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*"

Yokes are for those who are broken and submissive. Our wills must be subdued and yielded before we can learn of Him. He was gentle and lowly in heart. We must become

like Him, and only in so doing we will find rest for our souls.

## ***Elements of True Brokenness***

Now we come to basic questions, "What is meant by true brokenness? How does it manifest itself in a believer's life? What are some of its basic elements?"

### **I. Repentance, Confession, Apology:**

1. One of the first things is a readiness to confess sin to God and to those we have wronged.
2. A broken man is quick to repent. He does not try to sweep sin under the carpet. He does not try to forget it with the excuse, "*Time heals all things.*"
3. He rushes into the presence of God and cries, "*I have sinned.*" Then he goes to whoever has been hurt by his actions and says, "*I was wrong. I am sorry. I want you to forgive me.*"
4. If on the one hand he ... a) knows the scalding shame of having to apologize, b) on the other hand he knows the great release of having a clear conscience and of walking in the light. (I John 1:6-7, 9)
5. True confession does not gloss over sin or cover up its reality.

**In David's life we have a vivid illustration:** David's life was clouded by sin and failure, but the thing that endeared him to God's heart was his deep penitence. In Psalms 32 and 51 we retrace with him his transgressions, sin and iniquity. We watch him during the time when he refused to repent; life then was physical, mental and spiritual misery. Nothing was right. It seemed that everything was out of joint. Finally he broke. He confessed and God forgave. Then the bells began to ring again and David had recovered his song.

### **II. Restitution:**

1. Closely connected with this first aspect of brokenness is prompt restitution, wherever it is called for.
2. If I have stolen, damaged, or injured something, or if someone else has suffered loss because of my misbehavior, it is not enough to apologize.
3. Justice demands that the loss be repaid. This applies to what happened before my conversion as well as to what happens afterward.

**Illustration from Zacchaeus' life:** After Zacchaeus had received the Lord Jesus, he remembered some of the crooked deals he had pulled as a tax-collector. It was a divine instinct that taught him immediately that these wrongs must be made right. So he said to the Lord, ". . . *if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.*" Here the "if" does not express any doubt or indecision. The idea is "in every case where I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will restore it fourfold." His determination to make restitution was a fruit of his conversion. The "fourfold" was a proof of the vitality of his new life.

4. In some cases, we will not be able to make restitution, in fact it may be impossible. The person may now be dead to whom we would desire to

make wrongs right.

5. Or perhaps records have been destroyed, or exact amounts have been forgotten with the passing of time. God knows all about this. All He wants is that we pay back what we owe in every case where we can.
6. Maybe we need to make ***restitution for wrong attitudes, actions, hurts, unjust dealings*** and ***deeds that have hurt someone else***. We need to do everything in our power to make past wrongs right.

### **III. A Forgiving Spirit:**

1. A third element of brokenness is the willingness to forgive when we have been wronged. In many cases this takes as much grace as apologizing or making restitution. *It demands we have a broken and contrite heart.*
2. The New Testament is surprisingly explicit about this. First of all, whenever we have been wronged, we should immediately forgive the person in our hearts. (Ephesians 4:32) We do not go to him yet and tell him he is forgiven, but in our hearts we have actually forgiven him.
3. There are multitudes of little wrongs that can be forgiven, and forgotten immediately. It is a real victory when we do this. *“Love... does not keep account of evil, or gloat over the wickedness of other people.”* (I Cor. 13:7, J. B. Phillips trans.)

*The moment a man wrongs me, I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him, I sin against God, and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. Now he must face God with the wrong he has done, but that is his affair and God's and not mine. I should help him according to Matthew 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him.*

4. If the wrong is of a more serious nature, and you do not feel it would be righteous to let it pass, then the next step is to go to the offender and speak to him about it. (Matthew 18:15)

If he repents, then you must forgive him. *“And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and turns to you seven times, and says, ‘I repent’ you must forgive him.”* (Luke 17:4) It is only right that we should be willing to forgive indefinitely. After all, we have been and are forgiven times without number by our Heavenly Father.

5. You are NOT to go and tell everyone else about the offender's fault (that is what we almost invariably do). Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. The obvious strategy is to keep these differences as confined as possible.
6. As soon as the offending brother confesses his sin, you tell him that he is forgiven. You have already forgiven him in your heart, but now you can administer forgiveness to him.
7. God hates an unforgiving spirit, the determination to carry grudges to the grave, the unwillingness to let bygones be bygones.

**Illustration of Christ's teaching:** This is brought out forcefully in the parable of the debtor servant (Matthew 18:23-35). When he himself was bankrupt, he had been

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

forgiven by the king of a million dollars or more. But then he was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant a few dollars. The lesson is clear. Since God forgave us when we were in debt over our heads, we should be willing to forgive others who owe us trifles. Consider the end result: "We will suffer torment."

#### **IV. Enduring Wrong Without Retaliating:**

1. Here is another aspect of brokenness. It is the humble spirit that suffers for doing right and does not retaliate. Here our Lord is the prime example: (Read I Peter 2:22-24 and I Peter 2:19, 20.)
2. When Christ was reviled, He did not revile in return; when he suffered at the hands of the enemy, He did not threaten; but He committed Himself to the Heavenly Father. Do we manifest such a broken and contrite spirit?

**Illustrations:** In his book, *From Grace to Glory*, Murdock Campbell reminds us that John Wesley had a wife who made his life a trial by fire. For hours she would literally drag him around the room by his hair. And the founder of Methodism never uttered a harsh word to her.

Campbell also tells of a "a godly Highland minister who was married to a similar women. He sat one day in his room reading his Bible. The door opened and his wife entered. She hand snatched the Book from him and threw it into the fire. He looked into her face and quietly made the remark, 'I never sat at a warmer fire,' It was an answer that turned away her wrath and marked the beginning of a new and gracious life. His Jezebel became a Lydia, the thorn became a lily."

3. A great saint wrote, "*It is the mark of deepest and truest humility to see ourselves condemned without cause and to be silent under it. To be silent under insult and wrong is a very noble imitation of our Lord.*"  
-- J. Allen Blair

#### **V. Repaying Evil With Good:**

1. An additional advance in the life of brokenness is not only to bear wrong patiently, but to reward every wrong with a kindness.
2. We are even to repay evil with good, for if your enemy is hungry, we are to feed him; if he is thirsty, we are to give him drink; for by so doing we will heap burning coals upon his head.
3. We are not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17, 20-21) This will necessitate a broken and contrite spirit on our part.
4. Are we treating one another in the home as if we were enemies? And therefore we bring sorrows, heartaches, and wrongs of every kind and description? What happened to doing good to those who hurt us, thus returning love when we have been given wrong? (I Peter 3:8-11)

#### **VI. Honoring Others Above Self:**



### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

1. God commands us to esteem others better than one's self. (Philippians 2:3)
2. Truly a broken and contrite spirit means that we put others before ourselves in our thoughts, actions, attitudes, and responses.
3. Abram took this position when he willingly gave Lot the right to choose the pastures he desired and he would take the leftovers. Big-hearted Abraham moved farther into Canaan and was determined not to have conflict with his nephew. He put Lot's desires and interests above his own.
4. We are to love one another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another. (Romans 12:10)
5. This spirit necessitates a broken and contrite heart, a willingness to put ourselves last as we minister to the needs of others.

### **VII. A Prompt Obedience:**

1. God wants us to be broken in accepting and obeying His will. His will includes all the foregoing study, each item we have already covered. His will would demand our brokenness, contriteness, and submissiveness.
2. We are not to be like the horse or mule, which has no understanding, and is stubborn and not curbed with bit or bridle, lest we have the sorrows that go with such stubbornness. (Psalm 32:9)
3. Do we willfully resist the clear guidance of our Lord, and His written Word? Do we reject the clear commands of God in regards to those things that He has so clearly given?
4. Jonah was not broken. He was not willing to go to Nineveh and do God's bidding. It took God's intervention to bring him to the place of brokenness and submission to the direct, known will of God. (Romans 12:1,2)
5. What a picture of brokenness seen in the colt which Jesus rode into Jerusalem. (Luke 19:29-35) Up to that time no man had ever ridden on that colt. The will of the animal was completely submissive to the will of its Creator. What about us? (Ephesians 5:10, 17; 6:6; Colossians 4:12)

### **VIII. Death to Public Opinion:**

1. Are we willing to die to what people think of us, and just do God's will?
2. We need to be dead to the world's applause and its frowns. Are we dead to public opinion in that we will seek to do right no matter what it costs, or what people might say?
3. Paul was a person of this persuasion. In all the times he recounted his salvation experience he never waffled, but shared compassionately, and totally what God had done, even if it meant scoffing, rudeness, rejection or even death itself. (Acts 22:1-30; 23:1-35; 24:1-27; 26:1-29)
4. As long as we are concerned about ourselves, others opinions, etc., we have not come to the place of brokenness and contrition before the Lord.

**IX. Confessing Others' Sins As Our Own:**

1. When you study the book of Ezra, you become aware that Ezra took upon himself the burden of the sins of the people. (Ezra 9:1-10)
2. Ezra wept, mourned, fasted, prayed, confessed and sought God in such a way that the people were also moved to face their iniquities and deal with them. (Ezra 10:1-44)
3. We need to be so broken that we will confess the sins of God's people as our own. This is also what Daniel did (Daniel 9:3-19). He was not personally guilty of most of the sins he catalogs.
4. Daniel so identified himself with the nation of Israel that their sins became his sins. In this he reminds, of course, of the One who "*took our sins and our sorrows and made them His very own.*"
5. What is the lesson for us: Instead of criticizing other believers and pointing the accusing finger, we should confess their sins as if they were our own.
6. What is it we usually do? We are quick to point out people's wrongs rather than with sorrow bring them before God in humility and brokenness. If we would live out Ezra's example we would be broken over the sins that beset people, rather than having a condemning, critical spirit.

**X. Keeping One's Cool in the Crisis:**

1. A final evidence of brokenness involves poise and quietness in the midst of the crises of life.
2. When an unavoidable delay occurs, the natural reaction is to fuss and fume. Interruptions to the regular routine often provoke annoyance and fretfulness. Mechanical breakdowns and accidents -- how easily they upset us and even cause tempers to flare. ***Of course this is a choice for by the act of the will we choose to be angry.***
3. Changed schedules and disappointments have a way of bringing out the worst that is in us. The frenzy, the ruffled feathers, the anger and hysteria that all these arouse are ruinous to the Christian testimony, to say the least.
4. If we have a broken and contrite spirit we will accept these as events allowed by the Heavenly Father. We will embrace them as from His hand of love and within His providential purposes.
5. God is overruling the events of life. He has a purpose in what He allows, and wants us to look for the lessons, and use the opportunities these things afford to witness, and to bring others to Christ.
6. God's desire is that in all the circumstances of life we will react instantly with calmness instead of impatience, with brokenness instead of rebellion.

## **What Brokenness Does Not Mean**

1. It does not mean the person becomes a bland, spineless sort of jellyfish.
2. It does not mean that he becomes a powerless cipher, exerting little influence on those around him.
3. If anything is true, the reverse is true. ***Brokenness is one of the finest elements of a strong character.***
4. It does not take discipline to be unbroken. *But what self-control is required to be Christ-like when every natural instinct rebels against it!*
5. Broken people are the ones with the most persuasive characters. They influence quietly by the irresistible force of their other-worldly example. They are under control of One greater than themselves.

***They can say: "Thy gentleness hath made me great." (Psalm 18:35).***

6. And they are capable of anger. We see this in the life of our Lord. With anger He drove out the money changers. But the important thing is to see His anger flared not because of any wrong that was done to Him personally, but because His Father's house had been dishonored.

### **In Summary:**

Brokenness means I desire before God to be meek, quiet and submissive under pressure and hurt. Brokenness means that I desire that the Lord would put "*His tools upon my life -- cut me where I need to be cut -- drill me where I need to be drilled -- sand me where I need to be sanded!*" It means I desire for Him to prune me, cut away the self-willed life, and work in me so that I willingly bring myself to the place of contrition, over my selfishness and self life. **That I truly will desire to "yield my heart, soul, will, and affections to Him, allowing Him to work His blessed will in my life"!**

*-- Dr. Edward Watke Jr.*

**What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?**  
**Part Three**  
**Messages of Comfort**

***The Cup of Suffering!***

***The cup which my Father hath giveth me...shall I not drink it? Matt. 26:36-46***

**Consider:**

Psa. 11:6; Psa. 16:5; Psa. 23:5; Psa. 116:13; Matt. 26: 26-27; Matt. 26:39  
Matt. 26:42; Jh. 18:11

In a large hospital were seven huge steam roller presses. They are daily doing the laundry of this large hospital -- 2,000 sheets, 1,000 pillow cases, 2000 towels, 500 spreads were done every day. If these pieces could cry out because of the press, the pressure what would they say?

Just a soldier named Joe was out in battle, the blood was oozing from his body gradually as he lay there on the battle front; he had presence of mind enough to reach for his New Testament. There are on the ground when he was lovingly picked up they heard the sound of paper tearing and noted that one of his fingers was on the verse -- Psalm 23:1.

**I. CHRIST EXPERIENCED THE CUP OF SUFFERING! Jh. 18:11**

His very life was the fulfillment of the purposes for which He came. In His life experiences He found the **cup** which the Father would have Him drink.

In our text the "**cup**" represented the suffering of the Lord, the Cross and its shame.

**A. It was truly His cup -- None Other Could Drink that CUP! Matt. 20:22-23**

If a mortal drank the **cup** for a 1,000 years he could not drink it all, Christ suffered for a few hours on the Cross, paid the full price of our sin, which man could never do, even if he were to try and drink that **cup** for eternity.

1. The disciples would indeed drink of that **cup**, but they could not drink **the cup!**
2. The Apostles did suffering, each died a terrible death, martyred, but only Christ could take the terrible dregs of the **cup** of suffering given to Him by the Father and drink for us, in our behalf.

**B. It was a cup of judgment:**

1. Psa 53:1-5 -- Judgment was taken in our stead; in our place.
2. Isa. 53:10 -- God bruised Him, judgment was taken for me for He was my substitute. His soul was given as an offering for my sin -- I Tim. 2:5;  
I Pet. 2:24; II Cor. 5:21
3. He died the just for the unjust!

**C. It was a cup of horrible suffering:**

1. It was a **cup of suffering**, to be so treated by those whom He hope to help  
Jh. 1:10,11
  - a. He taught the Israelites and healed many of them;

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

b. revealed Himself unto His own, the Jews, but they would have none of Him.

2. A **cup of suffering** at the hands of a familiar friend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Psa. 41:9 *“He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”*

\_\_\_\_\_ a. Judas whom He sought to help betrayed him.

b. Judas who had walked with Him those many months became his enemy.

Cf. Jh. 13:18

c. A familiar friend used the sign of **affection**, a kiss, to betray the One who loved Him.

3. A **cup of suffering** for the sins of the whole world. *For this cup represented drinking the dregs of the wrath of God upon mankind’s sin.* Study these verses.

a. Jh. 1:29

b. II Cor. 5:21

c. Heb. 2:9

d. Gal. 3:13

f. I Pet. 2:24

g. Lk. 19:10

h. Heb 10:12

i. Acts 3:18

Matthew 26:39. We know that this was a time of great suffering, how else can you explain the trial in the Gethsemane -- *“Take this **cup** from me, nevertheless thy will be done...”*

4. It was not what Christ suffered at the hands of men that made an atonement for the soul -- but His soul was made an offering for sins by God the Father.  
Cf. Isa. 53.

5. This **cup** represents Christ’s lot in life--

\_\_\_\_\_ a. Christ’s lot -- the **cup** which He drank of deeply,

b. He drank all of it... was a **cup** of suffering, of sin-bearing for His own.

c. This **cup** contained the greatest sufferings ever known to man -- mental, physical, and spiritual suffering. And especially the anguish of soul to be made sin for our salvation.

d. The world abounds in suffering -- but none ever suffered as Jesus did.

e. We can’t fathom the suffering, the weight of our sins upon Him who hated sin perfect.

We can understand the anguish of soul, of heart and life when some terrible wrong has hurt us or someone we dearly love. Some have committed suicide because of some terrible wrong. They could not face life. What if we were bearing the infinite load of all the sins of mankind? What is this like? By One who hates sin perfectly?

## **II. CHRIST ACCEPTED THE CUP OF SUFFERING!** *“Shall I not drink it?”*

Just how did Jesus accept this **cup** of suffering? We will note the spirit in which He accepted this **cup** *from the hand of the Father, given to the only Begotten Son.*

### **A. He willingly, gladly accepted the cup:**

1. This was the **cup** the Father gave Him; sweetest thing in all the verse is right here. It was because the Father gave it; whole secret of accepting it is that it really came from the hand of the Father.

a. Not from the hand of the Romans,

b. Not from the Jews, or from Judas actually;

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

- c. but it came from the hand of the Father; for He look beyond the immediate to the One who gave it.
2. It is seen in the words of Psa. 40:8 *“I delight to do Thy will, of my God.”*
  - a. His delight was to accept the Father’s will... no matter what it included.
  - b. His meat -- was to do the Father’s will. Jh. 4:34

Heb. 12:1,2 Look up to the Great Author, He accepted from the Father’s hand, with thanksgiving the **cup** of bitterness that God had presented; God offered it to His lips.
3. Having subordinated Himself to do the Father’s will, having come to serve, to minister -- He willingly accepted the **cup** of suffering.

#### **B. He resolutely accepted the cup.**

1. *“Shall I not!”* is there one good reason why not?
2. Not wavering; hear His words, *“Put up thy sword, shall I not drink it.?”*
3. See Him facing Jerusalem some days before, when resolutely He went, knowing all that would happen.

#### **C. He submissively accepted the CUP. Matt. 26**

1. It was in connection with this same **cup** that He said, *“Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” “Thy will be done --”*
2. Submissive means to “send under”; willing to be sent under, for some testing or trial;
  - a. As equal with the Father -- He took the suffering,
  - b. As the One who would set aside His glory, his rights, drank the **cup** submissively that the Father had appointed to Him.

#### **D. He drank all, accepted all the contents.**

1. He did not hide His face from the shame;
2. He took the scourging, the mocking, the railing, the insults, the spitting, the beatings, the shame of it all.
3. Peter tried to save Him from the **cup** -- but He came to drink it all. He drank it all until He could say -- *It is finished!*
4. *He made possible for us to have the **cup** of salvation;*
  - of joy
  - of fellowship;
  - of forgiveness

### **III. CHRIST HAS A CUP FOR US TO ACCEPT!**

Is the servant greater than his master? What does this **cup** mean to the Christian? the saint of God?

- A. Your very circumstances, may be a cup which God,** the Father has designed for you; which He wants you to accept willingly resolutely, freely, fully. Why is your lot in life? What has God allowed?

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

### **B. Your distinctive calling in life must be accepted as the Cup for you from the Lord.**

1. To Job that meant all that happened to him.
2. To Daniel; to David; to Joseph, to Jacob it meant many different things.
3. Some may suffer more than others -- affliction; in HIS providence -- what is His **cup** for you?

### **C. All the changes in life -- must be accepted as His CUP from Him.**

1. We are in His training; We are in His school;
2. His curriculum for life may include much suffering in order to build Christ-likeness in us.
3. He allows many things -- some hard possible to take to mature life, and to build character in us for His glory.
4. Does He allow life to be static, stationary? *Known unto Him are all the best ways for us.* (Psa 37:23; Psa. 27:1, 14) Will not the God of heaven do right?

### **D. There are many cups for the saved:**

1. These are represented in various trials, afflictions, testings, and troubles,
2. These may even come from a friend; mistreated by someone we love; **cups** of disappointment; of bereavement; **cups** throughout life -- they are His appointments for our good. (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:13)

### **E. The cup must be accepted as From HIM!**

1. Don't accept the cups as from man by whom it may come; but as pressed to the lips by the Father.
2. He knows best for us; the mixture, the content of His design and for our highest good.
3. If we would be in the school of maturity -- of growth, then we must accept the **cups** of child-training; refuse it not; surely He knows best!

### **F. It all Comes from the hand of the Infinite, Loving God.**

How can we refuse that which comes from the hands of God's providence for us? What He allows is because He loves us. He brings into our lives that which we could not make happen, or change. The tests from the hands of others, of events, problems, situations -- are of His planning. Bow before them, receive them, rest in them, embrace them.

### **G. What about the cup of service and suffering? Accept it!**

**Read, study the following:**

Acts 9:11-16; 17-20; I Cor. 16:13, 15; II Cor. 12:7-10; II Cor. 5:10-13, 14

***God's Answer to Our Personal Adversity!***

## *What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?*

Adversity is the lot of every Christian! None will be exempt from the ongoing problem of adversity. We want to discover all that Paul discovered from his experience of adversity as found in II Cor. 12:1-9. (Note also chapter 11:23-28, and 4:7-11.)

1. Adversity is normal, even though allowed of God.
2. God may or may not show the reason for the adversity.
3. Adversity can be very painful, although allowed by God.
4. Adversity can be a gift from God.
5. Satan can be the agent by which the adversity comes. It may seem grievous. Some think the Christian life will be easy since God is in it.
6. God sends adversity to help, never to hinder us. God is doing good in our lives.
7. God never scolds for praying for release from adversity.
8. Paul learned God will comfort us in adversity. He will give sufficient and timely comfort.
9. We are never alone in our adversity, grace will overshadow us; God's presence will be there. He will give a canopy of love and grace -- 12:9
10. While experiencing adversity we can experience God' grace -- God is here now in the present tense for us.
11. By grace we are enabled to endure victoriously. His power will be perfected in our weakness. This was Paul's attitude and response. We must learn how to respond accordingly.
12. God may not see fit to remove the adversity. He is planning many good things for our growth and maturity. (James 1:1-3; Rom. 5:1-5)
13. God's power within us reaches its peak at the time of our greatest adversity. His power is perfected in our weakness.
14. The spiritual blessings we receive in our adversity can over-shadow the pain we feel.
15. The right response in adversity develops our fellowship with God. We can move into bitterness or we can become better! We can build a closer walk or we can walk away.
16. If God does not see fit to remove the adversity He can enable us to live with it.
17. We not only can live with it, we can rejoice in it.
18. Our present adversity may be preparation for the future lighter or heavier adversity. God is preparing for **our** future and preparing **us** for those future plans.



### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

19. The key to enduring adversity triumphantly is to *see it* from Christ's point of view, and *receive it* for Christ's sake. (See Heb. 5:5-9; Heb. 12:1-4)
20. Adversity equips us to understand others, and to comfort them in their adversity and pressures. We can have an ongoing ministry of encouragement to others.

**Note:** We must be concerned that our adversity and difficulties are not the results of our own sins. Too often adversity is our experience because of our own sinful ways and failures. God does chasten us!

- There is a big difference when adversity is sent from God for our good, ministered to us by a loving Holy Spirit.
- God is endeavoring to equip us and to make us more Christ-like. (II Tim. 2:22)
- He is more concerned about our character than our circumstances.
- He is more concerned about our spiritual condition than He is our wallet.

## Strength In the Midst of Weakness!

II Corinthians 12:1-10

### Introduction:

The ability to cope depends upon the application of the principles of the Word of God: Knowing them, understanding them, and then applying them.

### Many lies find their way into our think, such as:

1. I must be strong -- I have to be strong or what will people think of me!
2. If I don't perform as one who is strong, God will not be happy with me! (Note Ephesians 6:10; Romans 7 tells us Paul's true experience about sinful self.)
3. *Performing as a victorious Christian without failure is something **I must do!***

\_\_\_\_\_ In all of this we do a lot of lying, unknowingly at times, with expectations of ourselves that has to do with self-effort, and self-expectation. In this we are leaning on the *old man* and its *inabilities*.

David, King Uzziah, Moses and many others we read of in the Word of God were **victims of strength**, that is, they were leaning on the arm of flesh, looking to themselves for their strength and ability to be strong, to not fail, and to do right in their own power.

**There are three things about this that is important for us to see.** All three of these has to do with understanding where strength comes from, how we have spiritual strength for victory and what is necessary if I am to enter into that strength. The point is that strength comes out of weakness. This is clearly taught in the following verses:

II Cor. 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_

I Cor. 1:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 26:41 \_\_\_\_\_

## I. THE "STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS" COMMENCES WITH BROKENNESS!

We must be broken over all. That is, we must come to the place of the sense of weakness in ourselves and realize that in self is nothing but failure. (Psa. 51:17; 34:18)

**A. Disclaim any trust in yourself.** Paul knew what it meant to glory in his weakness knowing that would cause him to trust the Lord all the more and not the arm of human effort.

1. God brings us to brokenness and would keep us there.
2. God brought Paul to the place that he could only *look up*.
3. We want to turn on the very things God is using to build us -- we refuse them, resist them, and want new surroundings or new relationships, thinking that a change is all we need.

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

4. God gives us trials, testings, etc. that the difficulties would deliver us from greater trouble -- the failure that comes from looking to self and its abilities.
5. We need to stay where we are... for God wants us to see that ***all we need is Him.***
6. If we enter into these truths we will easily be on the cutting edge of victory -- yet we so often do not apply them to our lives.
7. There is a *rest that belongs to the people of God* and we are to enter into that rest. (Heb 4:1-9; 10:35, 36; Matt. 11:28-30)

## **II. The “STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS” -- CONTINUES WITH EXPECTED BATTLES**

### **A. We are so often baffled by continued suffering!**

We experience continued alienation, distresses, difficulties, trials, personal failures, and heartaches. We think that God should have delivered us from them all and that continued battles ought to be ended.

Thus, *we believe the lie* that deliverance from difficulty means that I have entered into strength, for I don't have the problems I used to have. But God is trying to use the problems to build my life and to bring me to dependence, obedience and an understanding of His will. He may allow continued suffering as He did in Paul's life to teach us continued lessons of His grace. ***God is using the circumstances, events, and people in our lives to build us!***

*Joy is not just light talk, there is the joy of stillness in God's presence even when all is dark and we seemingly do not know the way.*

### **B. We are often baffled by unanswered supplication.** (note II Cor. 9)

1. We feel our prayers go unanswered. Trust God, He is at work. We can be grateful that many prayers He did not answer!
2. God is seeking to exercise us unto godliness and complete dependency upon Him. All this will end in abounding grace and victory.

### **C. We are may be baffled by unannounced revelation.**

1. Paul did not find it right before God to share with man all that God was doing in His life. He may have been frustrated by things he could not share.
2. Today God works in our lives in mysterious ways, even allow defeat and difficulty in order to manifest His abounding grace and love.
3. Others may not understand what God is doing in our lives; we must walk with the Lord regardless of what others may think.
4. God teaches us through suffering as He desires to build our character through what He is *doing in our life*. ***God is more concerned about our character than He is our circumstances!***

**III. STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS -- CONSUMMATES IN VICTORY.**

**A. Without any change in circumstances Paul triumphed.**

1. He heard from God that God's grace was all that he needed; ***it is all need.***
2. Paul said he would rejoice in infirmities, and take pleasure in difficulties, necessities, distresses, trials, etc., ***for when he was weak -- then he was strong.***

**B. Abound grace is our portion;** it is to be our experience and is only known as we are willing to come to the place of *personal weakness*.

**For when I am weak -- then in Him, I am strong!!**

## **Facing The Disappointments of Life!**

A young lady started to work as part of the office staff of a Bible College. She was a 20-yr-old, cheery, friendly, bright-eyed and greatly liked. Three months later, a massive tumor was found in her abdomen. Doctors concluded she had only three months to live.

Debbie left for a hospital that specialized in cancer treatment. Later when she came back to work the cancer was in remission, it seemed as though she was cured. You can imagine the tremendous feelings of relief, and joy in the family and among her friends at the school. But the cancer did start to grow again and Debbie died some months later.

- Can you visualize what it must have been like to be lifted to the heavens , as it were, with those great feelings of joy and anticipation of a new lease on life only to have all hope dashed to the ground?
- During that time Debbie had to fight a tremendous sense of disappointment, as did her family and friends.
- The temporary promise of healing only heightened the disappointment.
- **Life can be so full of disappointments. We all have them, like:**
  1. You take a new job only to find out that it is a terrible environment.
  2. You have a promotion coming - but someone else gets it instead who is less qualified and unexperienced.
  3. You are deeply disappointed in your children's actions -- or youth, or after leaving home?

A women who had long been a Bible class teacher said, “ *Long ago I given up on God and on prayer. For 19 years I prayed that my daughter would grow up to be a missionary. Not only has she not become a missionary, but she is now married to an unsaved man.*” Looking wistfully into the distance, she said, “*I don't want to ask God for anything else because I don't want to be hurt and disappointed again.*”

We could all tell story after story about disappointments -- jobs that did not pan out, losses that we never expected to face -- marriages that did not succeed -- husbands that won't lead -- wives that are unwilling to allow the husband to lead -- financial decisions that brought loss and hurt.

### **I. DISAPPOINTMENTS ARE NORMAL:**

The Bible tells us about a time of severe disappointment experienced by the Children of Israel. I think in this we see many lessons: (Exod. 15:22-27)

1. They had just gone through the Red Sea that God had so gloriously opened up for them.
2. They had witnessed God's great power and mighty hand in their deliverance. They had seen the many plagues on Egypt and were aware of the awesome power of God.
3. The first part of Exodus 15 records their response to what God had done. The song is so full of ecstatic praise that you are sure they will trust the Lord even in the most difficult of situations.

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

4. But the heights of ecstasy did not last long in Moses day! *Maybe that is so often true in our day as well?* Tramping across the hot desert sand quickly reduced Israelites' supply of water -- to a sip now and then and none at all.
5. For 3 days they looked for water and found none. Repeatedly the scouts had nothing good to report. It is clear from the narrative that anxiety was increasing.
6. A report came -- "We have found an oasis, there is water ahead! Wow, glory." Parents probably had encouraged their children, "just a bit further and we will be there." Yet when they arrived they discovered water so bitter they could not drink it.
7. Grumbling set in, doubtless, they had experienced a tremendous feeling of exhilaration as they approached the oasis, convinced need will be met. *Now it seemed as if God was playing games with them? He led them to an oasis and their hopes soared only to be dashed to the ground.*

## **II. DISAPPOINTMENTS ARE A TEST:**

- We can learn some lessons about overcoming disappointment from this experience of the children of Israel.
- We will ask several questions:

### **A. First, What causes disappointment?**

#### **1. It comes from a wrong focus of thinking.**

The children of Israel had their minds and hearts set on finding water particularly and an improved circumstance in life in a general way.

We do not totally fault them in this, but think with me. When we have our hearts set on something in this world *we stand a tremendous chance of experiencing bitter disappointment or resentment, etc.* You have your heart set on a promotion for example; you feel it is done- *its in the bag*, you deserve it, when it is given to another the bottom drops out of your world.

Or maybe you have your heart set on marriage, for example, you meet another person with the same desire. You sense that it will work, in the Lord. Yet soon after the wedding, you realize he's not the kind of husband you expected. As the years pass, the differences grow, as does the strain in the marriage relationship.

Initially the disappointment is mingled with the hope that things will get better. As the days roll into months and years, there is less hope and more disappointment. Why did God let this happen to you is your question! And we become bitter, resentful, and probably directly or indirectly-- blame God for our lot in life!

In both of these illustrations, as in Israel, the focus was on circumstances, not on God. You were hoping circumstances would bring you joy, forgetting that joy comes ONLY out of your relationship with Jesus Christ! (Jh. 15:11; Phil. 4:4; Neh. 8:10) As long as our hope is based on something or a combination of circumstances in this world the risk of disappointment is very great.

#### **2. Secondly, the Children of Israel had their hopes pinned on a person, Moses.**

After all, he had been involved in such an astonishing number of miracles. So when the water was bitter, they grumbled to Moses. (Exod. 15:23-24)

## **What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?**

They were not actually grumbling against Moses. Their complaint was with God. Every complaint against the circumstances, or events of life are in reality a complaint against God.

On a list of 10 reasons why marriages fail unrealistic expectations is at the top! Other problems include such things as communication problems, anger, bitterness, hardness of heart, etc. But what is number one? Unfulfilled expectations! People expect a partner to provide what only God can do for them!

One woman wrote that she had made her *prince charming* the king of her life! When he left her after 20 years of marriage, she was no longer the queen, and it devastated her. She made little progress, despite several stays in a mental hospital, until a friend invited her to a Bible study. There she found that Jesus could meet her heart's needs in a way her husband had never been able to do. You say, "*But my wife or my husband would never disappoint me that way!*" Remember any human being is a potential broken reed. Only Jesus will never disappoint you. For that reason alone, your focus, even in a happy marriage, needs to be on your relationship with the Lord.

One of the most widespread causes for disappointment is the discovery that a spiritual leader has feet of clay. He is not perfect, he loses his temper or is rude at some point, or fails in some other way. Unfortunately we have our super-stars in Christianity even as the world has its superstars. We forget that Jesus alone is the superstar in Christianity.

### **B. Have you ever thought that our disappointments are God's way of showing that there are idols in our lives that must be dealt with?**

1. In Psalm 73, the Psalmist Asaph tells us that he looked at the rich, noticed they were often wicked people. He wondered why he did not have wealth like that as a servant of God. He wondered why they prospered so when they were so wicked. He said, "*My steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" (73:2-3)
2. Then he went into the temple, God reminded him of the end of the wicked. He quickly saw their end as Hell, and He stated, "*Whom have I in heaven by Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.*" (73:25)
  - The children of Israel arrived at Marah, their hearts set on improved circumstances, on an abundance of sweet water, on another great display of leadership by Moses, and they were severely disappointed.
  - They had not yet learned that God wants us to recognize that He alone is the One who can fully meet our expectations.

## **II. DISAPPOINTMENTS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY:**

### **A. What is the remedy for disappointment? It is an opportunity for God to work a Miracle!**

1. Moses had listened to the grumbling of the people. You can take only so much of that, so he quieted them and started talking to God. In fact He **cried out** to the Lord.
2. The Lord responded by showing him a tree that he cut down and threw into the water. Whether the tree was known for its ability to turn bitter water into sweet drinking water does not matter, the fact is that Moses saw the tree only when he called upon the Lord. God wrought a miracle.

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

- Prayer is the mighty power that is swifter than an eagle, stronger than a lion.
- Prayers puts you in touch with the resources of a compassionate and holy God.
- And when Moses prayed, a miracle started unfolding. He saw a tree that turned their situation totally around, alleviated their disappointment.
- God did a miracle. God changed the bitter water into the sweetest drinking water Israel had known.
- That is the way God responds to our disappointments. He changes the circumstances as we pray and look to Him, ***or He changes us that we might accept the circumstances and what He is teaching us in the process.***

Remember Jesus calmed the sea with but a word. Remember how the storm stopped when Jesus got into the boat after He came walking to the disciples on the water. He changed the water into wine, raised Jairus daughter, fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish. What would be the great miracle that God would want to perform in your life?

### **III. DISAPPOINTMENTS CAN BE STEPPING STONES?**

*What is the challenge of disappointments?*

**A. The challenge is obedience** -- Notice Exod 15:25-26 *“There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them, and He said, If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandment, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, am your healer.”*

**B. The experience of Marah was a test of their obedience.**

1. God establishing a pattern that He followed through the Old Testament. And God tests us today as well!
2. God tested the Children of Israel to see what was in their hearts, to see if they would really keep his commandments or not.

Focus on the disappointments in your life. Think about that chief disappointment you remember so well. Think of it in terms of a test permitted by God to see if you will obey Him, trust Him, and believe Him that He desires the best for you.

He is at work to build your life to make you Christ-like. If you think of every disappointment as a test, it becomes an opportunity to say, *“God, I’m going to readjust my focus, I’m going to learn my lesson. I’m going to trust you to do what ever is needed in my life. I want you to teach me, mold me, make me what you want me to be for your glory.”*



*What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?*  
**CHRIST, THE WOUNDED HEALER!**

**What Can We Do in Handling Our  
Infirmities, Our Failures?**

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that we have a High Priest who is *touched* with the *feelings of our infirmities*. An infirmity was primarily a physical spot, or a blemish. It was a defect or a deformity either in a man or in an animal.

If a man had an infirmity, (defect or deformity) even though he was a member of the priestly family of Aaron, he could not function as a priest. His infirmity disqualified him from entering the presence of the Holiness of God in the *Holy of Holies*. (See Lev. 21:16-24.)

In the New Testament we begin to see a figurative use of the word “*infirmity*”. It is a *metaphor or a figure of speech*. The common New Testament word for infirmity is the negative form of the Greek word, **sthenos**, which means strength. An “A” at the beginning of the word make it a negative, thus the root word, “*astheneia*” means a lack of strength, a weakness, or an infirmity, a crippling. It refers to a mental, moral, emotional weakness, to lack strength.

Infirmities are in themselves, not necessarily sins, but they do undermine our resistance to temptation and sin.

**“Infirmities are qualities in human nature which may predispose or incline us to sin: sometimes without any conscious choice on our part.”** The writer of the Hebrews writes about the Old Testament priest who had infirmities. (See Hebrews 5:1-3.) The Old Testament priest could understand the needs of the people because he had the same weaknesses and predisposition to sin as the people. He was subject to the same infirmities that predisposed all of us to temptation and to sin.

Then the writer of the Hebrews applies this picture to our great High Priest, our Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ. (See Heb. 5:5-7.) He never knew sin, because He did not sin, and never had to make a sacrifice on his own behalf. But He was tested, tempted, in all points like as we are, but without sin. **He was tested at every point as we are and as a result He is touch with the feelings of our failures, our weaknesses and our infirmities.**

**Christ KNOWS the FACTS of Our Infirmities!**

1. As our **Wounded Healer**, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquity. (See Isa.. 53:4,5.)
2. He knows the **facts** of our infirmities. He knows about every testing, every failing, every propensity we have toward sin.
3. He knows every inclination and our ease toward sin.
4. He is aware of the **fact** of every frustration and anxiety we may face. He knows about every time we experience depression and hurts.
5. He is aware of the **fact** of the abandonment and loneliness we may experience.
6. He **knew** isolation and rejection both by man and by the Heavenly Father.

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

Christ experienced the inner conflict and pain that comes from all of these factors.

So friend, Christ, as our ***Wounded Healer***, is very much aware of our crippling or emotional hangup; our inner conflicts and the physical and emotional inabilities we might have to even deal with these things.

### **Christ KNOWS the FEELINGS of our Infirmities!**

1. He is ***touched*** with the **feelings** of our infirmities.
2. He understands all the **feelings** (not just the fact) of our weaknesses, our crippling, our emotional hangups and inner conflicts.
3. He is aware of the **feelings** of the pain that comes from them. He understands the **feelings** of frustration and anxiety, loneliness, isolation and rejection we feel.
4. He not only is aware of the fact of it all -- but also the **feelings** of it all and how those **feelings** impact us!
5. Yes, He is TOUCHED with the **feelings** of the infirmities we face for **He has experienced** the whole ghastly gamut of emotions which goes along with our weaknesses and crippling.

**How can this be!** (See Hebrews 5:7,8.) In the days of His flesh (His humanity) he offered up prayers, supplications with strong crying and with tears. In His passion and suffering at Gethsemane He cried out to God, the Father. He prayed to God, the Father with loud sobs, **wrestling with feelings** that nearly tore Him to pieces. He has been through it all;

6. He knows the **feelings** of all the hurts, therefore He. . .
  - Christ urges us to come boldly to the throne of grace. *He is Emmanuel, God with Us.*
  - He is our solace, our comforter. He has been through it all. We can draw near with confidence and don't need to come feeling guilty, or shamefaced.
  - We are not coming into the presence of a neurotic parent who has to hear only good things from His children. Or who says, "*SShhh, don't feel that way, that's wrong, don't cry, if you keep crying I'll give you something to cry about.*"
7. We have a Savior and a Heavenly Father who understands and who invites us to come boldly and to share with Him our infirmities and failures. AMEN!

### **Christ KNOWS the Depth of our Emotional and Physical Pain!**

**Come with me to the Garden of Gethsemane!** To understand we need to come to the garden and see the passion and the suffering as set forth in the Gospels, the Psalms and in the book of Isaiah.

1. What did it cost HIM to become our Savior our EMMANUEL, our *God With US*? (See Isa.. 9:6; 7:14) *Matthew 26:37, 38 "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy.* What does this mean to us? Do we realize that He experienced such pain, feelings and sorrows in that wretched

## ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

hour that He wanted to die?

*Psa. 22:14, 15 and 69: 1,2,3,20 speaks of waters, floods, weary of crying, that reproaches broke His heart and that he was full of heaviness.*

These Psalms of dereliction about what Christ faced along with Isaiah 53:2-4 teach us that His strength was dried up like a potsherd or like clay in the baking oven. His tongue cleaved to his jaws, and He was brought to the dust of the earth for us.

2. He asked the disciples of the inner circle to pray with Him, but they failed Him. (See Matt. 26:40.) *Could ye not watch with me for one hour?* Three times He implored His friends, but to no avail. *“All the disciples forsook Him, and fled.”* (See Matt. 26:56.)
3. If you have battled terrible loneliness, pathological emptiness or the blackest of bouts of depression remember He knows all about it.
4. You know when you are in the pits the hardest thing to do is to pray. Maybe you do not feel God’s presence. I want to assure you that He knows, He understands, He **feels** your infirmity, He shares your **feelings**, for He has been there; He knows.

### **Remember Christ was**

- tempted directly by the tempter,
- assailed by the wiles of the enemy of our souls,
- tested by circumstances so adverse as to seem as if God, the Father, had forgotten Him,
- tested by the continued unbelief of the Jews, His brethren, who hated Him, and sought to kill Him at every turn,
- tested and tried by the constant little faith and slowness of heart of His own disciples, and
- made sin for us when He hated sin perfectly.

**Come with me to the mock trial the night of His passion.** Listen to the false testimony, have you been falsely accused? Do you know the hurt of that? *“They spit in His face, buffeted Him, others smote Him for they mocked him and struck Him in the face.”* (See Matt. 26:67; Lk.. 22:63.)

Tell me the worse picture in your memory, the one that comes to your mind the most often. Then remember that He knows all about horrible things for Christ faced all you could ever face and more.

### **Consider:**

Often people are filled with deep hurt, rage and pain and they may look like a *great stone face*. They may be without even a flicker of emotion. But if you could probe into their hearts and have shared with them facts, their eyes would start to fill with tears; soon overflow down the cheeks. Even some strong, strapping men are soon shaking with pain, anger and emotion. **What is it?**

**Maybe you meditate upon, “I remember when Dad would lash out, hit me on the face, when mother would slap me.”** Nothing is more destructive to a human personality than a slap in the face; it is humiliating, demeaning, and deeply dehumanizing. It destroys very basic feelings.

The **“Man of Sorrows”** (See Isaiah 53:1-7.), our Savior, understands. He knows what it is like to be struck on the head, to be slapped in the face; to even have His beard pulled from His face. He is touched with the **feelings** of our hurts. He **feels** the

### ***What Can You Do With Pains and Sorrows?***

problems that touch you and He wants to heal You. He understands and is not angry with your feelings.

**Come with me to the Cross!** Let us go a little further to the cross itself. *For there they derided Him, wagging their heads saying, "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross."* (See Matt. 27:40.) They mocked Him, railed at Him, scoffed at Him, deriding Him. These words may bring to mind growing pains of childhood and youth or the humiliating words and hurts of teen years. But remember He knows all about it! Do you feel the sorrows of failure, of hurts, of being abandoned and forsaken -- He does!

#### **Christ is THERE, HE KNOWS About Your DEEPEST NEED!**

(Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 13:5,6; Rom. 8:26-39)

1. You may feel so low you cannot pray. You may feel so abandoned, forsaken by man and maybe even feel you are forsaken by God -- but He is there and He cares.
2. **He is the captain of our salvation, made perfect through sufferings for us!** (Heb. 5:7-9) He truly feels our daily struggles, weakness, temptations and failures, and He is concerned. He knows sufferings. (See I Pet. 2:20-23.) He understands all the sufferings you will ever face and is able to *save or deliver you in the midst of them.* (See Heb. 2:18.)
3. **He is "touched" with the infirmities we face!**
4. Our failings, our ease of sinning, our failures, our predisposition to sin -- He is touched with all this.
5. He is the ONE who can deliver us. So we are to come boldly to His THRONE OF GRACE. He urges us to come in the time of our need! *We know we will not be turned away by a God who does care and understand.*

**The Holy Spirit also would be our comforter!** He urges us to know His comfort, for He is the ONE along side to support us! (See Jh. 14:26; 15:26.)

#### **Consider These Applications and Questions!**

1. What does it mean then that **all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose?** (Rom. 8:28)
2. How should I respond to testings, trials and sufferings, IF I am going to allow Christ to be my example? (Study I Pet. 2:20-24)
3. How should I respond to the fact that Christ is **touched with the feelings of my infirmities?**
4. How should that effect my attitudes toward my hurts, failings, etc.?
5. List every kind of emotion, pain, suffering, and sorrow that Christ experienced as you have seen it through this study. What does this mean to you?

**Pains, sufferings**

**Emotions sorrows,**

**losses**