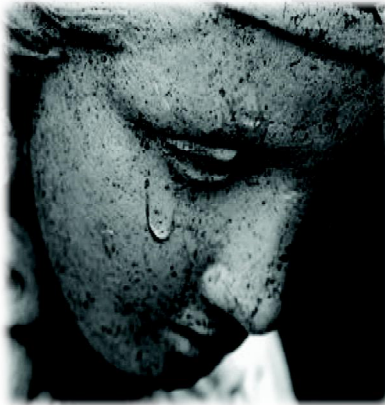


**18**



**SORROW**



# 18



## How not to Sorrow

**1**

Do not dream of happy times always.

**2**

Do not deny the feelings of sorrow.

**3**

Do not be immersed in worldly sorrow.

**4**

Do not despise God's chastisement.

**5**

Do not be afraid of men.

**6**

Do not sink in self-pity.

**7**

Do not slacken spiritual exercises.

**8**

Do not be puzzled by unsolved problems.

**9**

Do not ever contemplate suicide.

**10**

Do not lose hope of future glory.



## How not to Sorrow

### Introduction

- The words of King Solomon the wisest man who ever lived—  
Eccl 2:22,23 ... *days sorrowful ... work grievous ...*

There's no one without sorrow in this world —  
young or old  
rich or poor  
learned or illiterate  
religious or irreligious  
civilized or primitive

The main problem is not in sorrow itself;  
but our wrong handling of it.

- No one can escape sorrow—  
Job 14:1 ... *few days ... full of trouble ...*

Everyone has sorrow;  
but only a few overcome it —  
eg) Apostles (2 Cor 6:10a)

*... sorrowful ... but always rejoicing ...*

Rom 8:36 ... *killed all day long*

Types of sorrow (v35b)

*... YET more than conquerors ...*

- Martin Luther:

“You learn your theology most

where your sorrows take you!”

This is what exactly the Psalmist said—

Psa 119:71 ... *good ... afflicted ... learn ...*

Sorrows have this positive effect when they are handled rightly.

- The Book of Psalms is generally called a Book of Praise & Worship; but a comforting observation —  
Only 26 are Psalms of Worship; but 51 are Psalms of Lamentation!
- We learn more during the days of adversity than during the days of prosperity.  
Our spiritual strength is measured by how we respond to sorrow and suffering —  
Prov 24:10 ... *If you faint ... strength small ...*
- There are various word pictures for the word “sorrow” in each language.  
The Anglo-Saxon word is descriptive of a wolf seizing a sheep and strangling all the vitality of it.  
Wrong handling of sorrow adds sorrow to sorrow.  
It’s like the quick-sand phenomenon.

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## How not to Sorrow

### 1. Do not dream of happy times always.

- This lesson may look too simple;  
but this is where most of us stumble.

We are terribly shocked and surprised  
when calamities strike us.

Sorrow may be due to many reasons —

Sickness ... death ... financial crisis... loss... social conflicts...  
injustice... failures... workspot clashes... family problems...  
uncertain future ... ministerial confusions ... etc.

It's important that we get grounded in the Biblical truth  
about such undesirable happenings in our lives —

Let's refer to Ecclesiastes again —

- Eccl 3:1-8 ... Read the entire passage

The conclusion: v11

*“God has done **everything** beautiful in its **time!**”*

Whether it appears beautiful to us or not,

the truth is that all is beautiful in God's eyes!

Therefore He has called us to go on rejoicing

in all situations (vv12,13)

More than the problem itself, our worry is

what people will think about us when calamities strike us!

We forget that *“man is born for trouble!”* (turmoil) (Job 14:1)

This is the lot of everyone under the sun —

Eccl 4:1

This was the observation of **Moses**,  
who is introduced as the “man of God” in Psalm 90

See v10 ... *70 years ... 80 years ... sorrow!*

Was he not a man of faith?

Was he not an unparalleled prophet?

Did God speak *face to face* with anyone

as He spoke to Moses?

Moses prayed to God to balance bad days with good days!

v15 ... *according to the days of affliction*

The early saints were known for this act of balancing:

— Jeremiah: Lam 3:38 ... *woe and wellbeing ...*

— Solomon: Eccl 7:14 ... *prosperity ... adversity*

— The most classic example for balancing is Job:

Report of cattle taken away (Job 1:14,15a)

Servants killed (v15b)

Sheep and servants burnt (v16)

Sons and daughters killed when the house

collapsed (vv18,19)

Realisation of his entire body struck with boils (2:7)

Mrs. Job vs. Mr. Job (2:9,10)

The “foolish” theology of Mrs. Job

is the most popular doctrine of the day!

■ Has not Christ redeemed us from all curses?

— No, only from the “*curse of the Law*” Gal 3:13

The guaranteed “*blessing*” is “spiritual” —

v 14 ... *blessing of Abraham ... promise of the Spirit*

— Not from the “curse of the fall” ... Gen 3:16,17  
“*pain ... sorrow ... death ...*” not removed yet!  
Removed only in the New Heaven & New Earth (Rev 21:1-4)

- Until then,  
we are **all** groaning:  
Rom 8:22,23 ... “*we also*” = Believers not exempted  
Not an isolated passage —  
Repeated: 2 Cor 5:1-3 ... *we groan*
- Suffering and Sorrow are not necessarily  
because we go against God’s ways.  
They will be there even if we are in God’s will.  
eg) Joseph ... “*sent*” by God,  
but ... Psa 105:17-19 ... *hurt ... chains ...*
- God has **not** promised a smooth or problem-free life —  
Isa 43:2 ... *sea waters ... rivers ... fire ...*  
but assured us of His presence:  
“*I will be with you!*”  
John Wesley: “The greatest of all is God is with us!”  
That’s **the** blessing of life in Christ —  
Mt 1:23 ... *Immanuel!*  
Therefore, do not dream of happy times always,  
but delight in the Lord always!

## How not to Sorrow

### 2. Do not deny the feelings of sorrow.

- There's a wrong teaching that expressing our grief is lack of faith, and it is negative confession. This may sound good, but definitely not Scriptural.
- We cannot get a wholesome teaching on suffering and sorrow without turning to the Book of Job — Job is quoted as an example in the NT —

Js 5:10,11 ... *endurance ... patience ...*

Let's turn to his book and see how he expressed his grief —

Job 3:11 ... *Why did I not die on my birthday?*

6:1-3 ... *My grief if weighed ... sand of sea ...*

7:19 ... *Unable to swallow my saliva*

10:1 ... *I will **speak** of the bitterness of my soul*

17:1 ... *My grave is ready*

This does not mean his lack of faith or wrong idea about God.

See the following verses on his knowledge about God—

9:4 ... *wise and mighty*

9:10 ... *innumerable wonders*

10:12 ... *You have granted me life and favour.*

13:15a ... *Though He slay me ... trust Him*

19:25a ... *I know my Redeemer lives!*



- There were still others who did not deny/hide their sorrow—  
eg) David and his Psalms

From beginning to end he pours out his feelings of sorrow:

Psa 6:6,7 ... *groaning ... tears ... swim ...*

Strikingly, most of the quotes for the sufferings of Jesus were from Psalms —

- False witnesses (Mk 14:57/Psa 27:12)
- Dividing the garments (Mt 27:35b/Psa 22:18)
- Blasphemy (Mt 27:39/Psa 22:7)
- Mockery (Mt 27:42/Psa 69:9b)
- Gall for drink (Mk 15:36/Psa 69:21)
- *My God ... My God* (Mt 27:46/Psa 22:1)

If David had hidden/denied his sorrows,  
where is prophecy for the details of the sufferings of Jesus?

- The next classic example is Jesus Himself —

He did not hide His feelings before His disciples:

Mt 26:37 ... *began to be sorrowful*  
:38 ... *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful ...*

There's a false teaching:

Because Jesus bore our sorrows,  
we do not need to bear any sorrow!

But the truth is otherwise in the Bible —

eg) Apostles: 2 Cor 6:10a ... *sorrowful but rejoicing*

Even in an Epistle of Joy — Phil 3:1; 4:4 —  
Paul speaks of “*sorrow upon sorrow*” (2:27,28)

- These are classic examples;  
but the supreme example for sorrow is GOD HIMSELF —  
Gen 6:6 ... When His expectations collapsed!  
*The Lord was sorry ... grieved ...*

This is about the entire human race.

See how God expressed His grief of disappointment  
over His people Israel —

Isa 5:3,4 ... **Please** judge ... *what more can I do?*

One of the names of Christ in prophecy:

*“A Man of Sorrows”* (Isa 53:3)

This was seen on *His face* (v2b)

The Holy Spirit can be *“grieved”* to the extent of being

*“quenched”* (inactive) — Eph 4:30/1 Thess 5:19

- **Tears** are a God-given means to express grief —

Let's look at some examples:

- Joseph first wept in secret (Gen 43:30,31)  
(When he saw Benjamin)  
Then in public (45:2)  
He did not think it was not manly,  
that too as a Governor, to weep!
- King Hezekiah  
When told about a terminal illness —  
Isa 38:1-5 ... *turned to the wall ... wept ...*  
God said: *“I've **seen** your tears!”* (v5)
- Lord Jesus wept in public for Lazarus (Jn 11:35)  
*“Jesus wept!”*  
The shortest/sweetest verse in the Bible!  
Though He knew He was going to raise Lazarus!

Tears are precious in God's sight:

Psa 56:8 ... Tears collected in *His bottle*

Prayers recorded in *His Book*

The Bible itself clearly states that —

*“the **trials** of life are grievous, **not** joyous”* (Heb 12:11a)

- Some spouses testify in public at the funeral services of their spouses;

whereas others cannot simply do it —

This is **not** an indication of greater faith or lesser faith!

Paul did **not** say,

We must not sorrow over death;

but *not* sorrow “*without hope*” like unbelievers.

1 Thess 4:13

The reference is to heathenic practices —

Dt 14:1 ... *Cutting oneself or total shaving of head*

- We are not to hide/deny our sorrows;  
at the same time we should not go about sharing it  
with everyone —

Very few grieve over our sorrows;

many will secretly rejoice over it!

If someone shares his grief with you,

encourage him and pray for him;

but never spread it for gossip or scandal.

## How not to Sorrow

### **3. Do not be immersed in worldly sorrow.**

- The Bible speaks about two types of sorrow —

2 Cor 7:10 ... *godly sorrow* vs. *worldly sorrow*

Godly sorrow produces: Repentance & Salvation

Worldly sorrow produces: Ruin & death

Worldly sorrow means sorrow over physical,  
physiological and material matters,  
as against spiritual concerns.

- Examples of worldly sorrow —

- Physiological/bodily needs

Mt 6:31-33 ... *food ... drink ... dress ...*

Worldly cares vs. Kingdom concerns

In Luke, it's just *SEEK*, not *SEEK FIRST!*

(KJV) "*seek rather*" (Lk 12:31)

Because, this sort of worrying is useless —

Mt 6:27 ... *by worrying ... add one cubit?*

Solution: Know that *our FATHER knows* (v32)

- Health conditions

3 Jn 2 — The question here is,

Do we care the same way for our soul  
as we care for the body?

Forgiveness of sins precedes healing of diseases:

Psa 103:3 ... *forgives ... heals ...*

Without healing we can go to Heaven;  
but without holiness we cannot!

□ Material losses and business failures

Hab 3:17-19 ... *fig ... vine ... but SALVATION*

Salvation is greater than any other blessing.

Mk 8:36,37 ... *what profit ... loses his soul?*

Just imagine: Gaining the whole world is nothing  
compared to the salvation of one soul.

Even the richest man in the world  
does not own the whole world!

□ Problems of children

Children are a blessing from God;  
at the same time every other parent  
has enough of worries from children.

Our primary worry about our children  
should not be physical or material, but spiritual.

— Job (Job 1:5)

The **first** reference to sorrow in this book of sorrows!

— David's primary concern about his son Solomon:

1 Ki 2:1-3 ... Dying words

We are interested in giving the best education to our children,  
but forget the spiritual dimension —

Prov 1:7 ... *fear of God ... beginning of wisdom ...*

Whatever they earn,

it will be a failure without this wisdom

*“with all thy getting (earning) ... get wisdom” (4:7)*

Mere education will only add sorrow —

Eccl 1:18 ... *much wisdom ... knowledge ... sorrow*

Similarly, mere accumulation of wealth by huge salaries —

Eccl 5:13,17 ... *riches ... hurt ... darkness*

Another example of worldly sorrow —

□ Loss or damage of properties

eg) Jonah (Jon 4:9-11) ... *pity ... persons*

The book ends with this challenging question!

■ God desires that we share in His sorrow:

that's "godly" sorrow —

□ Salvation of souls

Rom 9:2; 10:1 ... *continuous sorrow*

□ Wellbeing of saints/the Church

2 Cor 11:28,29 ... on the top of other problems

(vv 23-27)

□ So many problems in the House of God

Hagg 1:4,9 ... *My house in ruins ...*

Everybody claims the promise of 2:19b—

*"From this day I will bless you!"*

Why rush to the 2nd chapter without facing

the questions and challenges of the 1st chapter?

God desires that we change our priorities:

That's why twice: *"Consider your ways"* (1:5,7)

■ Godly sorrow also means that we think of those who suffer more than us —

□ Heb 13:3 ... A mild injustice we face vs.

outright mistreatment of prisoners

- Js 1:12 ... already in *various “trials;”*  
 but think of others —  
     1:27 ... *widows in their troubles*  
     2:15 ... food and clothing for the have-nots!
- Job’s sorrow over the poor (Job 30:25)  
     ... *wept ... grieved for the poor ...*  
     An Indian: “I have voting rights but no bread.”

■ A warning:

If worldly sorrow outwits godly sorrow,  
                                   we will be unfruitful in Christian life —  
                                   Mt 13:22 ... *Choked!*

Godly sorrow is better than worldly joy!

(See also Pages 52-54, 104-106, 439-440, 563-565, 755-758)

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## How not to Sorrow

### 4. Do not despise God's chastisement.

- This is a direct statement from the Scriptures —  
Heb 12:5a ... *My son ... despise not ...*

This is a quote from the OT:

Prov 3:11

That means, this is a wholesome teaching from the Bible.

- Two absolute statements from Hebrews 12,  
a chapter on chastisement:
  - (a) No son God does not chastise (v7)
  - (b) No chastisement is joyful (v11)

- Two major causes of chastisement:

Negative : To punish sin

Positive : To promote holiness

eg) Parents those days caned children for —

- (a) failing in the exam;
- (b) not getting centum!

(a) If chastisement is for punishment,  
the only way out is repentance:

- Exemplified in Job:

Job 6:24 ... *Teach me where I erred*

10:2 ... *show me where ...*

13:23 ... *make me know my sin ...*



- God's call thro' prophet Jeremiah:

Jer 30:15 ... *Why cry? ... your sins ...*  
:10b ... *return ... rest ...*

- Why complain? Search and Repent!

Lam 3:39-41 ... *search ... examine ... turn back ...*

- David's experience:

Psa 39:9,10 ... *I was mute*  
:8 ... *my transgressions*

Once there's genuine repentance,  
usually God removes the affliction,  
unless He has greater purposes in that chastisement —  
Exemplified in the times of Judges:

Judg 10:15,16 ... *His soul could **no longer***  
*endure their misery.*

- (b) Another reason for chastisement is

to promote holiness in us —

- Again exemplified in Job:

There was no gross sin in his life —  
Job 1:1

But chastisement made him holier —

Job 42:5,6 ... *ears ... eyes ... abhor ... repent*

- Already we are "holy" brothers (Heb 3:1)

To *partake of **His** holiness* in a deeper sense —  
Heb 12:10

Yes, sorrows bring us closer to God than joys!

- Jesus "*made perfect*" thro' sufferings —

Heb 5:7-9

This is not from sinfulness to holiness;  
but He was tested and proved perfect!

- Another important truth to remember about chastisement:  
God is “just” in all His chastisement —

Neh 9:33 ... *You are just ... dealt faithfully*

Mic 7:9 ... *His indignation ... righteousness*

Therefore,

- Never doubt His love —

Isa 63:9 ... *In all their afflictions, He was afflicted...*

No father rejoices over the suffering of His children!

Psa 119:75,76 ... Even afflictions are *in His faithfulness*.

Lam 3:1-23; 31-33...*His compassions*

*He doesn't afflict willingly.*

Psa 30:5 ... Anger “*but for a moment*”

“night of weeping” — How long is the night?

:11a ... *mourning into dancing*

What will be our answer to the question:

“What is the moral of the story of Job?”

The answer: Js 5:11

*“The Lord is VERY compassionate and merciful!”*

- That's why the Bible says:

*Happy (blessed) is the man whom God corrects —*

Job 5:17...*THEREFORE, do not despise God's chastisement.*

:18 ... *He bruises and He binds up (bandages)*

He is not only Jehovah-Makkeh (Ezek 7:9)

*“The Lord who strikes”*

but also Jehovah-Rapha (Ex 15:26)

*“The Lord who heals”*

The hand that strikes is the hand that embraces!

“அடிக்கிற கைதான் அணைக்கும்!”

Dt 32:39 ... *I kill and I make alive ...*

*I wound and I heal ...*

Hallelujah!

■ **Additional thoughts**

- Another purpose of chastisement is to make us realize how we respond to the sufferings of others  
Job scored in it (Job 42:7-10)
- To teach us practical humility—  
King Manasseh (2 Chr 33:12,13)  
King Hezekiah ... *walk softly ...* (Isa 38:15)
- Chastisement drives us to the *joyful wells of salvation*  
(Isa 12:1-3)

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## How not to Sorrow

### **5. Do not be afraid of men.**

- A popular Bible verse:

Prov 16:7 ... *When a man's ways please the Lord,  
He makes even his enemies to be  
at peace with him.*

This does not mean that a righteous man will not have enemies who oppose him.

This simply means,

Because a godly man does not do any evil to any man,  
he is generally liked by people.

But the Bible is filled with stories of God's men  
who were opposed and tortured by enemies —

- Joseph was a godly young man;  
but Gen 49:22,23 ... *archers grieved ... hated him ...*
- David was a man after God's own heart;  
but Psa 3:1,2 ... *many rise up against me ...*

He simply *cried to the Lord*  
and went off to *sleep!* (vv 4,5)

Similarly, Psa 7:1,2 ... *They tear me like a lion ...*

Earlier David tore the mouth of a lion;

now his enemies are tearing him down!

He had the conviction that the wicked

*will fall into their pit!* (v15)

Psa 13:1,2 ... *How long ... How long ... How long ...* (daily)

Even in Psa 23 ... *“a table in the midst of my enemies”*

Psa 22:19-21 ... *rowdies; dog* (bark & bite);  
*lion* (roar); *oxen* (gore)

- Jesus did everything to please His Father.  
There was no sin/fault in Him.  
He *went about “doing good”* only.  
But we know how His enemies hated Him,  
tortured Him and finally killed Him.

- Apostles

1 Cor 16:9 ... *“many” adversaries*

2 Cor 6:8 ... *“evil report ... dishonour”*

2 Cor 11:26 ... *“own countrymen ... false brothers”*

3 Jn 9,10 ... *Diotrephes ... malicious words*

Therefore, no child of God should be surprised  
if there are enemies against him.

They may be open or secret enemies.

- How to be delivered from the fear of men;

- Prov 29:25 ... *fear of man: snare*  
*faith on God: security*

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917):

When you fear God, you will fear nothing else;  
when you don't fear God, you will fear everything else!

This was the teaching of Jesus:

Lk 12:4,5 ... *only kill the body ... cannot kick into Hell!*

Taught clearly in —

Isa 51:7 ... *Do not fear*

:12 ... *just mortal ... only grass ...*

— This is an oft-repeated truth in the Bible  
i.e. “*What can man do to me?*”

- Psa 27:1-3 ... *Whom shall I fear?*
- Psa 56:4,11 ... *What can flesh do to me? (twice)*
- Psa 118:6 ... *What can man do to me?*

This truth is carried to the NT also —

- Rom 8:31 ... *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

These passages bring us to the conclusion:

- Heb 13:6 ... *So we may **boldly** say:  
The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear!*

**Who** can be against us?

Who **can be** against us?

Who can be **against** us?

Who can be against **us**?

■ How to respond to enemies:

- a) If accused, check your life.

Set matters right and go ahead.

God uses enemies to straighten and smoothen our path:

Psa 27:11 ... *Lead me ... because of my enemies*

- b) Relax into the hands of God

- David ... Shimei

2 Sam 16:6 ... *stoning*

:7 ... *cursing*

:11b,12 ... *may be the Lord ...*

- David... Amalekites... burnt and carried away

men and women

1 Sam 30:6 ... *to stone him ... encouraged himself ...*

- Jeremiah ... priests & people ...  
Jer 26:11,14 ... *Do whatever you want ...*  
No panicking!
- c) Learn to ignore meaningless accusations  
and ill-motivated scandal:
  - David: Psa 38:13-15 ... *deaf and dumb*
  - Jesus: Mt 27:11 ... He answered Pilate  
:12... He did not answer priests (accusations)  
(God-given wisdom)
- d) The devil uses fear of man ultimately to paralyse us;  
do not get distracted from your work.
  - Nehemiah  
Five attempts: including an open letter  
Neh 6:3-5 ... same answer: *"I cannot come down!"*  
**The** purpose: To stop the work (v9)  
For every minister of God,  
there will be a Sanballat and Tobiah!  
Do not be afraid of them;  
keep going forward  
doing what God has assigned to you.

■ **Additional Thoughts**

- *Answer a fool ... answer not a fool* (Prov 26:4,5)
- Even if a prophet curses you (Dt 23:5)
- *A net ... but I'll sing* (Psa 57:6-8)
- Witchcraft (Num 23:23)
- Friend turned foe (Psa 41:9)

## How not to Sorrow

### 6. Do not sink in self-pity.

- We cannot prevent sorrows in our lives;  
but self-pity/sympathy is our own choice.

When sorrows overwhelm us,  
we must speak to ourselves —

Psa 42:5,11 } ... *Why are you cast down,*  
43:5 } *my soul? Hope in God! (thrice)*

i.e. God is still on the Throne!

Coming out of the **dust** is our responsibility —

Isa 52:2 ... *Shake yourself!*  
*Loose yourself!*

Similarly, out of darkness —

Isa 60:1/Eph 5:14 ... *Awake ... Arise ...*

- Do not refuse to be comforted —

Rachel in Ramah (Jer 31:15)

Jacob for Joseph (Gen 37:35)

David for his child (2 Sam 12:17)

But Jeremiah presents a bright testimony —

Jer 8:18 ... *Though he was a prophet of sorrows!*  
*... I would comfort myself in sorrow ...*

- Rejoicing is “our” responsibility —

Phil 3:1; 4:4 ... *Rejoice ... Again ... rejoice ...*

Note the repetition in this Epistle.



Do all that's possible to become cheerful —

Prov 15:13 ... *Cheerful countenance*

It's said: Laughter is the best medicine!

- Self-sympathisers usually find fault with those  
who do not sympathise with them.  
But we must remember,
  - Everyone has his own suffering  
1 Pet 5:9 ... *same suffering ... by your brothers*
  - In many cases, theirs is worse than ours  
Lk 23:27,28 ... *your children ... difficult days*
  - Others cannot fully understand our sorrows  
Prov 14:10... *The heart knows its own ... but a stranger...*
  - There are simply too many people who do not  
sympathise with others but sing for them  
Prov 25:20 ... *vinegar on soda*
  - Do not expect much from people.  
No expectation, no disappointment —  
Psa 69:20,21 ... *no grapejuice but gall !*
- The best way to overcome self-pity is to sympathise  
and empathise with the sufferings of others —
  - eg) Jesus — He was agonizing, but He ministered to —
    - a) The dying thief — who sympathized with Jesus  
for the unjust punishment (Lk 23:39-41)
    - b) The weeping mother (Jn 19:25)
- When you suffer,  
instead of sinking in self-pity,  
pray for others that they might not suffer like this —

eg) David: Psa 35:12 ... his own sorrow  
:13,14 ... mourning for others  
as a friend, brother, mother

- If you don't become concerned with others,  
very likely you will become a "saddist" —  
i.e. You will want others also to suffer ...

But the apostles —

- Epaphroditus was distressed that his sickness  
made others sad! (Phil 2:25,26)
- Paul's sorrow becomes less in making others happy! (v28)  
See how sensitive Paul was in this area,  
lest he made anyone sorrowful —  
2 Cor 2:1-3 ... **determined** *not to make you sorrowful*

- Self-pity weakens our spiritual muscles.  
That's why in the Chapter on Chastisement,  
the author of Hebrews speaks about —  
strengthening of "*weak hands,*" "*feeble knees*"  
and "*lame feet*" (Heb 12:11-13)
- Do not keep on mourning! Come out!  
God: "Samuel, why keep on mourning for Saul?  
Go forward and anoint David!" (1 Sam 15:11,35; 16:1)

#### ■ **Additional Thoughts**

- If the sorrow is due to guilt of sin,  
confess it and come out of it —  
Don't stay in self-condemnation— Neh 8:9-11 / 1 Jn 4:4,7,9
- Worry does not empty tomorrow of its troubles,  
but robs today of its strength.

## How not to Sorrow

### 7. Do not slacken spiritual exercises.

- When we are overwhelmed with sorrow,  
we tend to wonder,  
“What’s the use of praying, Bible meditation,  
and all such spiritual exercises?”  
If we take this attitude, we’ll further sink in our sorrow  
rather than sailing over it.
- Let’s briefly consider 4 spiritual exercises  
we must engage in —

#### **(a) Bible Meditation**

We know that Psalm 119 is entirely  
on the subject of “God’s Word”—  
Interestingly it’s primarily linked to suffering and sorrow —

v19 ... loneliness	vv 69,78,86 ...
v22 ... reproach	false accusation
vv 23,161...unkind leaders	vv 85,95 ... plots
v25 ...flattening experiences	v141 ... despised by people
v28 ... heaviness	v143 ... trouble & anguish
v51 ... mockery (derision)	

Conclusion: “*Unless Your Word had been my delight*” (v 92)  
Comfort thro’ the Word (vv 50,52)  
In the NT, *comfort of the Scriptures* (Rom 15:4)

When our hearts melt with sorrow and heaviness,  
the Word fills us with joy —

Psa 19:8 ... *rejoice the heart*

Even if you don't feel like reading the Bible,  
keep reading it.  
You will see new horizons of God's love through your tears.

**(b) Prayer & Praise**

The immediate Biblical prescription for suffering is

PRAYER:                      Js 5:13

□ Hannah was in the *"bitterness" of soul* because of her  
barrenness—

She prayed (1 Sam 1:10,15)

□ Hezekiah "first" *prayed* and then "*cried*" —  
(Isa 38:2-5)

□ Jabez (His very name means Pain)—

He prayed and was answered

(1 Chr 4:9,10)

□ *Jesus ... strong crying and tears ...*

(Heb 5:7)

He was not delivered from the Cross;

but God enabled Him to endure the Cross!

— The Bible repeatedly exhorts us to call

unto the Lord in the day of trouble

Psa 50:15 ... *Call ... I will deliver ...*

— Inexplainable peace:

Phil 4:6,7 ... *prayer ... thanksgiving ... peace*

whether or not the problem is solved!

Otherwise the devil will devour you: 1 Pet 5:7,8

— Not only prayer, but also praise:

*"Why disquieted, **yet** praise Him"*

Psa 42:5,11  
43:5

— The righteous man sings and rejoices —  
Prov 29:6b ... Use hymnbooks.

Don't give up if instant deliverance does not come —  
Cry and wait patiently ...

Psa 40:1-3 ... *horrible pit ... miry clay*

It's by praising God we turn "*Baca*" into "*Berachah*" (Psa 84:4,6)

#### **(c) Fellowship of God's children**

- Sometimes it's necessary to sorrow in solitude (Job 10:20);  
but the sooner we move into the company  
of God's people the better!

Only then we will be comforted by one another —  
1 Thess 4:18 ... *Comfort one another*  
5:11 ... *Comfort one another*

That's the Body principle: 1 Cor 12:26

... *If one organ suffers, all the organs ...*

— A good word from fellowship gladdens the heart ...

Prov 12:25 ... *heart ... depression ... good word*

God brings us into the "*House*" of Prayer to make us joyful  
Isa 56:7

The warmth of fellowship will prevent us from freezing to death!

#### **(d) Christian Service**

- There will be a normal tendency to stop all our spiritual  
activities when we are struck by calamities/disasters.  
But that's not the solution.

It's simply the Enemy's trick to paralyse us.  
The Bible abounds with examples of those who continued  
their ministry in spite of problems and sorrowful situations—

- Joseph — a prisoner himself was ministering  
to fellow prisoners  
Gen 40:6-8 ... Butler and Baker ... *"Why are you sad?"*
- Job — already in a miserable condition;  
but he prayed for his friends  
Job 42:10 ... Ministering to others may be one way  
of deliverance for us!
- Zacharias & Elizabeth — childless for long years (Lk 1:7)  
It was a matter of worry (v13);  
but they were busy in the ministry (v8)
- Jesus — It was while preparing for His death that He  
offered the High Priestly prayer for His disciples (Jn 17)
- Jesus — John's death — solitude —  
but quickly got involved in ministry (Mt 14:12-14)  
Even on the Cross, He was winning a soul!
- Amy Carmichael — Confined to bed for many long years—  
Wrote and composed some of her best poems
- Joni Ericson — A quadriplegic due to swimming accident  
Confined to wheelchair —  
Ministers to 1000s of such people worldwide,  
gifting wheelchairs.
- I have personally witnessed:  
Many who stopped the ministry began to sink  
further; but others sailed over their sorrows!  
Yes, if we sow in tears, we'll reap in joy! (Psa 126:5,6)

■ **Additional Thoughts**

- *Garment of praise instead of sackcloth* (Isa 61:3)
- *Until going into the sanctuary* (Psa 73:14,16,17)
- *When prayers seem to be shut out* (Lam 3:7,8,44)

■ A hymn by Joseph Scriven (1819-1886):

*Have we trials and temptations?*

*Is there trouble anywhere?*

*We should never be discouraged—*

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Can we find a friend so faithful*

*Who will all our sorrows share?*

*Jesus knows our every weakness—*

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

(See also Pages 68-70, 259-252, 385-388, 651-656, 735-737)

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## How not to Sorrow

### 8. Do not be puzzled by unsolved problems.

- It's an erroneous popular teaching that coming to Jesus is the "end" of all our problems. The truth is, Our problems actually "begin" when we start following Jesus!  
Another truth:
  - **Some** of our problems God solves; but **several** of them He leaves as they are. We have to **live** with certain problems.
- Let's look at two outstanding Bible characters who lived with prolonged problems —
  - a) Psalmist David
    - Psa 13:1,2 ... *"How long"* ... 4 times  
Daily sorrow ...
    - He handled it by faith and praise —
      - vv 5,6 ... *I have trusted ... rejoice*
    - He considered "*salvation*" the most precious gift.
  - b) Apostle Paul
    - 2 Cor 12:7-9 ... *thorn ... thrice ... grace ...*
    - Solution: "*gladness*" and "*pleasure*" in infirmities, experiencing God's *grace and strength*.
- Another suffering which never ends —
  - Suffering for "righteousness" (life, not preaching)
    - Mt 5:10 ... relief in *Heaven* only!
    - 1 Pet 2:19,20 ... *grief ... commendable ...*



- Unsolved problems are mainly for character development —

Rom 5:3,4 ... *tribulations ... patience ... character ...*

Js 1:2-4 ... *various trials ... patience ... perfection ...*

Written to the 12 tribes of Israel (v1)

The history of Israel vividly illustrates this —

- a) The wilderness journey

Ex 13:17,18 ... So we may not easily backslide

(Round-about route)

Dt 8:2 ... (Why 40 years?) ... *to humble us and test us*

9:7 ... We are basically rebellious —

We don't change easily or quickly!

No character develops instantly.

It's the constant irritation

that helps the oyster to produce a pearl!

- b) The conquest of Canaan

Why God left some nations —

Judg 3:1-4 ...to train them for war and also to test them

This explains why certain battles

in our lives never cease.

Psa 144:1 ... *trains my hands ... and fingers ...*

But we are not left alone in this journey or the battle —

The “Comforter” ALWAYS *with us* (Jn 14:16)

The need for continuous help and comfort implied.

- Unsolved problems present an opportunity for greater blessings —

- Suppose you are barren and there's no hope

or possibility of having a child —

It may be God's message to you  
to become the parents of a parentless child —  
“adoption”

Parentless children outnumber childless couples.

Our God is a *God of the fatherless* —

By adopting a child,  
you can bring a smile on God's face towards you!

If God gives you a child of your own later,  
it's a double blessing!

After all, we are all God's “adopted” children only!  
(Rom 8:15)

- Times of affliction an opportunity to recollect  
and fulfill our **vows** —  
Psa 66:13,14 ... vow while in trouble  
132:1-5 ... *Remember “David” (not me!)  
and his afflictions ...*

- Don't be pondering over the problems of the present;  
but remember the blessings of the past!

A hymn by Johnson Oatman,  
a Methodist lay-preacher (1856-1922):

*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings — name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done!*

*Count your blessings — name them one by one;  
Count your blessings — see what God hath done;  
Count your blessings — name them one by one;  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done!*

I'm sure Mr. Oatman had unsolved problems of life in his mind while composing the hymn — Look at the next stanza:

*Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the Cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings — every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by!*

- Even if God answers our “why” questions  
we will not be able to understand them!  
Just trust in the Lord,  
and keep running your race with patience!

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## How not to Sorrow

### 9. Do not ever contemplate suicide.

- When we are overwhelmed with sorrow,  
and we don't know how to handle it,  
the tendency is always to quit.  
    Suicide seems to be the ultimate answer.  
    Let's see how futile and foolish is such a thought.
- When man is not able to overcome sorrow,  
he tries various means of finding happiness and satisfaction—
  - Amassing of wealth  
    It makes matters worse!  
    1 Tim 6:10 ... *"piercing with many sorrows"*  
    i.e. prolonged suicide  
  
    Money is like sea water;  
    the more you drink it the thirstier you become!
  - Revelry (merrymaking)  
    This also ends in grief and sorrow!  
    Prov 14:13 ... *laughter ... sorrow ... grief*
  - Liquor  
    This also leads to *"woe"* and *"sorrow"*  
    Prov 23:29-32 ... *bites like a serpent*  
    What about Prov 31:6,7?  
    ... Extreme condition: more like a medicine
  - Tranquilizers and sleep  
    These do not help much!  
    Job 7:13-16 ... *bed ... choose strangling ...*

All these things Solomon tried,  
but found them all *vanity* (= useless)

Read Eccl 2

He tried “*wine*” (v3)

“*works*” (vv 4-6)

“*wealth*” (vv 7,8)

“*women*” (v10)

Conclusion: v17 ... *vanity* ... *hate life* ...

*grievous grasping of wind*

- This is very much true in our country —

eg) Bangalore is the suicide capital of India

even though it's the Garden City and Electronic City!

Men usually enjoy more pleasures than women;

but the suicide rate among men

is much higher than that among women.

And this happens during the “best part” of life —

Suicide is highest in the age group of 15 to 45

Next 45 to 60

Next 60 +

Next upto 14

- Temptation or desire to end one's life is not uncommon —

Even godly men had this temptation —

□ Prophet Elijah (1 Ki 19:3,4) ... *Take my life ... enough*

□ Patriarch Job (Job 7:15) ... *soul chooses strangling*

□ Psalmist David (Psa 55:4-6)

*... pain ... terrors ... wings like dove!*

- Suicide is never God's perfect will for anyone.

□ Biblical examples of suicide are those of backsliders —

Samson ... Saul ... Judas Iscariot

□ Suggestion to commit suicide was from a foolish woman:  
Mrs. Job (Job 2:9,10)

□ Suicidal tendency is demonic.

Mt 17:15,18 ... *pushing into fire and water ...*

Demons make even animals to commit suicide—

Lk 8:30,33 ... *legion ... pigs ... lake ... drowned ...*

■ **How to overcome suicidal tendencies**

(a) Reach out to someone for help.

Suicide does not generally happen on the spur of the moment. The thought would have been brewing  
inside the troubled individual.

Nib it at the bud.

Share with a trusted friend.

Prov 12:25 ... *depression ... good word ... glad*

Seek professional counselling.

Just like medicine is not opposed to prayer and faith,  
psychiatric help is not opposed to the Bible.

In some families there's a history of suicides —

Professional help is a must here.

There is secular counselling and Biblical counselling.

Believers will benefit more from the latter.

(b) Renew your faith in God.

□ Repetition of the question in mind —

*“Where is God?”*

Question from within (Psa 22:1)

Question from others (Psa 42:3)

Question from enemies (Psa 42:10)

- Believe God’s promises:  
What God told you in the light, don’t doubt in the dark!  
*“I will not forsake you”*  
Isa 49:14-16 ... *The Lord has forsaken me*  
*... Can a mother ... palm of My hands*

Even if forsaken by family folks —

Psa 27:10 ... *father and mother ...*

- God will forgive whatever be the sin —

Both Peter and Judas sinned against Jesus.

Peter’s sin was more serious than Judas’!

But Peter turned to Jesus and was restored.

Judas condemned himself and committed suicide.

There’s no sin that cannot be washed by the Blood—

*Though red like crimson* (Isa 1:18)

(secret: “COME”)

There are suicides reported among perfectionists!

Unable to live upto some preachers’ teaching — Eccl 7:16,17

- Relax into God’s hand.

David: Psa 31:12 ... *Like a dead man ... out of mind ...*

*:15a ... My times are in Your hand*

#### ■ **Additional Thoughts**

- *Man born for trouble ... but number of days with God*  
(Job 14:1,5)
- *Sinking ... upto neck ... but praying* (Psa 69:1-3,13,14)
- *Cast your burden on the Lord and overcome* (Psa 55:6,22)
- *He will revive us again ... too early to give up* (Psa 71:20,21)
- *Beyond measure ... no trust in ourselves but in God*  
(2 Cor 1:8-10)

(See also Pages 768-772)

## How not to Sorrow

### **10. Do not lose hope of future glory.**

- While referring to bereavement,  
Apostle Paul said, *“Don’t sorrow like those without hope!”*  
1 Thess 4:13  
  
Sorrow is not wrong, but sorrow without hope is useless.  
Even in the OT, David overcame sorrow by the thought of  
eternity —  
2 Sam 12:22,23 ... *I will go to the child!*
- Yes, Christ’s Return is the ultimate comfort for all sorrows—  
1 Thess 4:18 ... *Comfort with these words*  
The Return of Christ & the Rapture of the Church  
(vv 16,17)  
  
This has been the prophetic expectation in the OT times —  
Isa 35:3,4 ... *Strengthen weak hands ... He’ll come.*  
:10 ... *sorrow and sighing flee away*
- The very purpose of all trials in life is to refine and purify  
our faith for presentation at the Return of Christ —  
1 Pet 1:6,7 ... *more precious than gold*
- The tendency to give up will be there at every stage in life;  
but the fact of Christ’s Return is the most powerful motivation  
to keep us going —  
Heb 10:35 ... *confidence*  
:36 ... *endurance*  
:37 ... *Yet a little while ... He’ll come!*



These are like the words of encouragement  
spoken to the woman at the hour of delivery!

Jn 16:21... *A woman at labour!* (The very words of Jesus)

- That's why Jesus said:

Jn 14:1-4 ... *Let not your heart ... a place for you ...*

- It was this understanding that made the apostles to call  
the "sorrows & sufferings" of the present as "*light affliction*"—

2 Cor 4:17,18

*"light" affliction* vs. *"weight" of glory*

*"for a moment"* vs. *"eternal"*

Moses said it: Psa 90:4

i.e. one day on earth will be 1000 years in eternity.

i.e. for each day of gloom on earth,

we will have over 1000 years of glory in eternity!

Peter endorsed it: 2 Pet 3:8

That's why Paul said,

*"The present suffering **nothing** compared to future glory!"*

Rom 8:18

- Suppose you are suffering from an incurable  
and painful disease —

Keep praying and trusting the Lord for His grace.

At the same time, remind yourself of the glorification  
of your body in Resurrection —

Rom 8:21,23 ... *groaning ... redemption of body*

That was how Job handled his physical suffering —

Job 19:25-27 ... *Redeemer lives ... my skin ...*

One of the rare OT references to Christ's Resurrection!

Glorification of our bodies in eternity was  
actually the longing of the Apostles —  
2 Cor 5:1,2 ... *this tent ... groan ... eternal building ...*

- Away with the fear of future! Rejoice over the hope of future!  
Ask: What's the worse thing that can happen,  
and is it likely to?

என்னதான் நடக்கும் நடக்கட்டுமே!

40% of things we worry about never happens!

A motto in an office:

DON'T WORRY; IT MAY NEVER HAPPEN!

- Whether good or bad in our lives,  
ultimately everything for our good!  
Rom 8:28 ... *All things work together for good ...*  
(vv 35-39 speak of various sufferings)

Even the “evil” that people plan against us  
will turn out to be for our “good” —

eg) Joseph (Gen 50:20)

Israelites in Egypt (Ex 1:11,12)

Whatever God allows (Psa 66:10-12)

*“net ... fire ... water ... fulfilment”*

#### ■ **Conclusion**

Psa 73:21 ... *heart grieved*

:24 ... *receive me in glory*

:25 ... *who but You?*

“GOD IS ALL IN ALL!”

■ **Additional Thoughts**

- No more sorrow in Eternity (Rev 21:4)
- *Pressed, crushed, ...* but faith on Resurrection  
(2 Cor 4:8, 10-13)
- *Wipe away all tears: When?* (Isa 25:8; Rev 7:16,17; 21:4)  
(*When death is swallowed up*)
- Of the long list of suffering, the first one is patience  
(2 Cor 6:4,5)
- Trinitarian *God of Comfort*: Rom 15:5/2 Cor 1:5/Acts 9:31
- God washes the eyes by tears until they can see  
the invisible land where tears shall come no more.
- Your Good Friday may be long, but that's not the end;  
there will be an Easter Sunday!

(See also Pages 786-789)

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