

How to Make the Best of the Worst

A Biblical Seminar on Suffering by David Hinds

The responses of three Biblical sufferers:

† Mary, an unwed mother: Luke 1: 46-50

† David, a king suffering from depression: Psalm 13: 5-6

† Job, a wealthy businessman who had lost his children, his health and everything he owned, except for a nagging wife and a few judgmental "friends": Job 19: 25-27.

Discuss how their understanding of the sovereignty of God affected their response to their individual suffering.

Practical Application: How do we handle the hard times?

† **Be Prepared.** John 16: 33, Jeremiah 12: 5, Luke 6: 46-49

Why?

† **Trust God, not your feelings.** Erect a monument. Take God at His word.

Isaiah 49: 14-16, Isaiah 41: 13

Philippians 4: 13, Philippians 4:19

Numbers 11: 4-6 Was meat a need or a want?

1 Peter 5: 6-7, Hebrews 4: 15-16

2 Timothy 1:7 Identify the source of your fear. I can't come from God, so from whom did it come?

Hebrews 13: 5-6

Romans 8: 38-39 This should be our credo. The real issue is "do we trust God and believe His word, or don't we?"

† **Understand your feelings.** We will not always "feel" close to God.

Isaiah 41: 10. What were the feelings of the one being commanded by God?

Psalm 13: 5-6 What is the context of this Psalm?

Matthew 27: 46 "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" What was Jesus "feeling" when he said this?

Mark 14: 32-36 What had Jesus done to prepare for the ultimate suffering?

† **Surrender all of your expectations to God.**

Galatians 2: 20 Who am I living for?

Philippians 4: 6-7 What is the key to peace in the storm?

Job 13: 5 How much did Job trust God?

Applications from the texts

- What we truly give to God, Satan can never use to tempt or trouble us.
- Be realistic about your options.
- If everyone else fails you, God will hold you up. Deuteronomy 33:27

† **Live one day at a time.** Matthew 6: 33-34

† **Concentrate on the basics** of quiet time, Bible study, Bible meditation, scripture memory.
Matthew 11: 28-30

† **Look for opportunities to minister.** Hurting people draw hurting people. The lost and uncommitted want to know if Jesus really makes a difference in our lives. The way we deal with suffering on a personal level supplies that proof.

2 Corinthians 1: 3-7

† **Look for the positive.** Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

1 Peter 5: 10-11

James 1: 2-4

† **Use down days to trigger trust.** Psalm 57: 1

† **Expect lessons to be summarized and restated.** John 14: 26-27

† **Write it down.** We will forget what God has done for us in the fury of living.

The following two devotions are excerpted from Walt Hendrickson's excellent yearly devotional guide, Thoughts From The Diary of a Desperate Man. (email: wah34@home.com to order.

Learning Obedience

"Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Heb. 5:8

Gethsemane is the only recorded incident of Jesus meeting the will of God and not wanting to do it. He pled with God, "let this cup pass from me." Earlier he said, "my food is to do the will of him who sent me." In Gethsemane he prayed, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." This tension between what he wanted and what his father wanted caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood."

You don't learn obedience by complying with commands you perceive to be in your interest. Rather, when like Jesus, you are denied the request you make to your heavenly father--that is the test through which obedience is learned. If God, who had no higher commitment than to his son, denied his request, you should not allow his denial of your request to threaten his love and commitment to you.

When my six-year-old son was dying of leukemia, the doctor had to run a large needle through his thigh and into his bone to draw bone marrow. I held him in my arms during the procedure, and as the pain mounted he looked me in the face asking, "It hurts so much, can't you make them stop?" I assured him that it was essential that they do it, and he said okay, squeezing his little arms around my neck.

As I heard him whimper in pain I prayed, "Oh God, if my son can trust me, a fallible, sinful man when I tell him 'no', help me to trust you when you refuse to remove my pain in the time of testing."

The Twin Pillars of Faith

"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isaiah 46: 10

If you desire a satisfactory relationship with God, two pillars must be firmly anchored in your life. You must believe that He is in control and that He has your best interest at heart.

The sovereignty of God must be a deeply held conviction. When my son was dying of leukemia, a friend wrote, "I don't know how this tragedy came about, but I do know that it did not come from God. God is not in the business of killing little children. " As I pondered his observation, I concluded that if God did not kill my son, then I have a far greater problem than my son dying. I worship a god who is not in control. God was not sitting on the edge of the universe chagrined over the disease that ravaged my son's life. As I held my son in my arms while he slipped into eternity, I know that I was experiencing the beautiful handiwork of God.

This naturally leads to the second essential pillar: The goodness of God. God is good. He is incapable of doing anything but good. The debate, like so many debates in life, is over who gets to determine what good looks like. Do you truly believe that the hurts of life come from the hand of a good God who only does what is best for you?

The writer of Hebrews, quoting from the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews 13: 6 quoting Psalm 118: 6). There are only two people in life that can hurt you: you and God. Because He is good, seeking only your best, in the final analysis, only you can destroy your life. He does not delegate your destiny to Satan or any other force on earth.

Without these pillars firmly embedded in your convictions, you will find it difficult to survive the storms of life.