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From:

To:

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Subject: God's Comfort In Sorrow

<http://www.tpgh.org/GCS.htm>- This is from Pastor Perry F. Rockwood. He was a faithful pastor for 70 years and on the radio for 60 years. He went through many sorrows as we all do.

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God's Comfort In Sorrow

By Radio Pastor Perry F. Rockwood

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Sorrow is universal. It is an emotion common to all people. An elderly man smiled wanly as he asked, "What good am I now? Why does God leave me here? Circumstances are all against me and I feel so useless?" A dear lady wrote, I have just lost my husband of 45 wonderful years. I miss him very much and cry a lot. Is it wrong to weep and to have such sorrow?" A young man, just informed that he had cancer and must undergo a long series of treatments, prayed, "Lord, why must I suffer like this? Why can't I be like others?"

The sorrows of this life are too heavy for us to bear alone. As believers we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. 2 Corinthians 1:3 reminds us that our Heavenly Father is "the God of all comfort." He is able to bind up the broken-hearted, to heal the most painful wounds, and to give hope and joy amidst the heaviest sorrows.

The Bible is full of things to comfort believers. It assures us that God knows all about us. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:13-18).

Our Lord tells us in Matthew 6:28-32: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

God cares for us. We are of more value to God than the whole world. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) It was for us that God gave His Son. Furthermore, God's whole plan of the ages is built around us for He wants to enjoy our fellowship forever. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come

he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" Eph. 2:4-7).

God has promised to care for us in every sorrow. David knew the problems of old age faced by so many senior citizens today. In Psalm 71:9 he prayed: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." His desire was to remain on earth, to show the strength of God to the new generation and the power of God to their children who were yet to be born. Verse 18: "Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

Growing old is not a thing to be feared. God takes special care of the elderly. "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isa. 46:4). God has made us and He will carry us through and deliver us. What a wonderful Saviour!

God can help those who are sick. He does not always choose to heal but He has promised to help. Who has not experienced sufferings like Job as he tossed on his bed night after night. "Wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day" (Job 7:3,4). Oh, what pain and mental anguish! David, too, cried: "I am weary with my groanings; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6:6).

Nighttime in the Bible often speaks of sorrow, sickness and trouble. Pain that is difficult to bear in the daytime is much more difficult at night. Sickness and suffering, nevertheless, can bring us to the place of praise and victory before our Lord. Suffering silences Satan as we see in the life of Job. God gave Satan permission to lay his hand upon His servant and his praise silenced Satan. Instead of complaining this humble servant praised the Lord saying: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Sickness helps us to glorify God. Jesus said in John 11:4 concerning the death of Lazarus: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Some of the greatest sermons I have ever heard came from the lips of those who were sick and yet able to glorify God.

Sickness makes us more like Christ. The purpose of salvation is to conform us to our blessed Lord. Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." This is a very precious truth.

In order to fully accomplish this goal there must be suffering, pain, and sorrow in our lives. No believer will ever be like Christ without afflictions similar to those which are Lord experienced. Hebrews 2:10 tells us: "For it became him, for whom are all things...in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." And verse 18 tells us: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (help) them that are tempted."

To be conformed to the image of the Saviour means that we must follow Him - not only to the Mount of Transfiguration and to Mount Calvary and to the Garden of Gethsemane - but we must follow Him also in His sufferings. Paul's desire as an old warrior for God is revealed in Philippians 3:10: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

We remember the words of that old hymn:

"Earthly pleasures vainly call me,
I would be like Jesus.
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me,
I would be like Jesus.
Be like Jesus, this my song,
In the home and in the throng,
Be like Jesus all day long,
I would be like Jesus."

Suffering makes us more thankful for our blessings. I know it is often difficult to praise the Lord in the midst of physical affliction and aggravating pain. When I was in Grade 7 I had rheumatic fever and was bedridden for twelve months. While I was not saved at that time, I was thankful for a teacher who brought me little things to do. I was thankful for my mother who cared for me so lovingly. I was thankful to be alive and able to look forward to better days of increased strength like that of other fellows.

Many have written to say how thankful they are for the broadcasts that encouraged them during times of illness, heartache and sorrow. God says in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Suffering reminds us of our dependence upon God. Oftentimes when we are well and strong and "living in the sunshine" as it were, we are self-sufficient. But when suffering comes we depend upon the Lord. Isaiah wrote: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (30:15).

Suffering strengthens our faith in God. The Bible tells us: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24,25). God wants to increase our faith. This strength comes as our faith is exercised by our hope. We cannot always understand the "whys" of God's love but we hope and exercise our faith. God has many promises for us and we need to believe them and apply them to our lives.

"I do not know why oft 'round me,
My hopes all shattered seem to be;
God's perfect plan I cannot see,
But someday I'll understand.
Someday He'll make it plain to me,
Someday when I His face shall see;
Someday from tears I shall be free,
For someday I shall understand."

Suffering purifies our lives and causes our spirits to rejoice in the hope that lies before us. 1 Peter 4:12,13: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Many suffer persecution because of their witness for Christ. This is a privilege, indeed!

Suffering makes our hearts more tender and sympathetic towards others. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether

we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation" (2 Cor. 1:3-6). Unless we know the personal results of God's comfort in our tribulations we are not able to comfort others in their trials. To have compassion is to enter in along side of the other person. Suffering enables us to better understand the needs of others.

Suffering keeps us humble. How easy it is for pride to spoil God's plan for our lives. The apostle Paul was concerned lest his pride should cause him to boast in his own spiritual experiences. He wrote by the Spirit of God in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Suffering brings a special reward to those who endure. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."

Then there is the sorrow of death to cope with. If our loved ones die in the Lord we know that they are with Christ which is far better. "To depart, and to be with Christ;...is far better." The sorrows of earth are all past for those who are enjoying the presence of the Lord. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away....And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve Him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 21:4; 22:3-5).

Yes, friends and loved ones must leave us, but God will NEVER leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

"There is never a day so dreary,
But God can make it bright,
And unto the soul that trusts Him,
He giveth songs in the night.

There is never a path so hidden,
But God will lead the way;
If we seek for His Spirit's guidance,
And patiently wait and pray."

God manifests His Fatherly comfort through His Word. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). A closed, neglected Bible often is the cause of comfortless hearts. As we read and meditate upon the Word each day, we see the Lord and learn to draw upon His strength in our times of need.

"There is never a cross so heavy

But the nail-scarred hands are there;
Outstretched in tender compassion
The burden to help us bear.
There is never a heart so broken
But the loving Lord can heal,
For the heart that was pierced on Calvary
Doth still for His loved ones feel.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22). "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted" (Isa. 49:13).

COMFORT FROM THE BIBLE

When you are troubled:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

When you are afraid:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me..." (Ps. 23:4).

When you face trials:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

The Bible tells us how we can trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour:

Recognize that only God can save you...not because you are "doing the best you can," not because of your religious efforts, but because of what Jesus Christ did for you on the Cross of Calvary. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

Confess that you cannot save yourself, that you are a sinner worthy of God's righteous judgment. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Believe the good news that Christ died for you and that He arose from the dead and now lives to save all who come to Him (Heb. 7:25). "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Rely upon God's sure promise, not upon your feelings. By faith declare you are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ shed for the forgiveness of your sins. Openly confess Him as Lord and Saviour (Rom. 10:9,10).