



Sorrows that Last a Lifetime

The possibility of sorrow lasting a lifetime may seem impossible, especially for followers of Christ. Sorrow, however, is part of life; and there are precipitating situations in which sorrow might fade from its initial intensity but never fully go away. For example:

- Your marriage partner is sexually unfaithful.
- A family member is murdered, dies in an accident, or succumbs to a terminal disease.
- One of the trusted leaders in your life is discovered to have practiced hidden, self-destructive sins.
- A member of your family is discovered to be a child molester.
- A close friend deceives and betrays you.
- You cause an accident in which another person is killed or permanently injured.
- A friend or family member remains addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.
- You were abused as a child.
- You (or a family member) divorce due to a marriage partner's self-centeredness.
- You (or a family member) were raped or were a victim of another violent crime.
- You remember your own sinful behavior that caused great harm to yourself and others.
- You become aware of those who satisfy their self-centered desires at the expense of the weak.

Other situations could be listed, but it should be evident that some circumstances of life can result in various levels of extended sorrow. This sorrow can resurface from time to time due to memories, calendar dates, dreams, people associated with distressing events, verbal or visual reminders, or lingering consequences of devastating life events. This sorrow can last for years, even though its intensity may diminish over time and not be problematic every day.

This article presents some of sorrow's potential consequences but also relates how a believer in Jesus can grow in Christ, help others, and bring glory to God in spite of any sorrow they experience.

CRIPPLING SORROW

Sorrow is defined and experienced as grief, emotional anguish, sadness, regret, disappointment, or deep distress. Set against this growth-inhibiting backdrop, devastating effects related to sorrow should not be minimized. Some of these detriments are sleeplessness, poor job performance, hopelessness, persistent neglect of personal and family responsibilities, carelessness, depression, unconcern for others, fear, appetite loss, worry, crying, revenge, or suicide. As you might expect, the effects of sorrow can vary from person to person due to personality differences and, especially, emotional and spiritual variations.

KEY TRUTH TO REMEMBER

If you have responded in faith to God and believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can still remember situations associated with sorrow. As a believer, however, you will not be crippled by sorrow's detrimental effects if the following truth characterizes your life in Christ. **Out of loving thankfulness to Jesus for providing forgiveness of your sin and granting you eternal life, you gratefully and continually respond obediently to God's plan for your life that is presented in the Bible.**

Colossians 2:6-7, Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

SIGNIFICANT TEMPTATION WITH REGARD TO FEELINGS

When a believer experiences sorrow, perhaps the greatest temptation is to allow personal feelings to determine whether or not God's Word will be followed. Instead of obeying Scripture out of love for Christ, a believer can sometimes allow sorrow to be a catalyst for self-focus to predominate. In sorrow, a believer may doubt that God's Word

applies to the present situation. Yet Scripture tells believers to remain focused on Jesus, to die to self, and to follow Christ faithfully by obeying God's Word in every aspect of life.

Galatians 5:17, For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Matthew 16:24, Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

John 14:21, Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Hebrews 12:1-2, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Philippians 4:8-9, Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Maturing believers learn that they are to trust and obey God's Word—no matter how they feel—for every aspect of life and relationships which, obviously, includes sorrow.

Psalms 119:28, My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

Psalms 119:50, This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.

Psalms 119:59, When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies.

Psalms 119:165, Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

OUR EXAMPLE IN TIMES OF SORROW

Jesus is the example for every believer to follow in times of sorrow. Jesus, described as a "man of sorrows" by the prophet Isaiah, is also the source of lasting peace and joy. That may sound paradoxical, but these characteristics blend perfectly in Christ.

Isaiah 53:3, He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

John 14:27, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

John 15:11, These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

As the Source of lasting peace and joy, Jesus also experienced sorrow in an unimaginable dimension. There is nothing that can compare to the sorrow and distress that Jesus encountered in light of His crucifixion.

Matthew 26:36-39, Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Even though the physical agony associated with crucifixion was immense, there was an aspect of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf that would cause Him to grieve in a manner that only He could experience. Many men had experienced the physical torture of the cross; but even if they were falsely accused on a particular crime that led to their crucifixion, they all had sinned in various ways throughout their lives. Jesus, on the other hand, lived on this earth and never sinned in thought, word, or deed. If He had committed even one sin, He would not qualify to be the Sacrificial Lamb that "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Our sinless Savior, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, knew that He would soon become sin on behalf of those

whom He came to redeem. The awfulness of that reality, in all probability, caused Jesus to recoil emotionally; but He did not allow His grief and great distress to deter Him from obeying the divine plan for His life. In His sorrow, Jesus turned in prayer to the Source of strength, His Heavenly Father, and remained fully committed to the Father's will. As we reflect on this unequalled experience of Christ in the Garden, we recognize that emotions do not deter the commitment of loving obedience to do the Father's will.

Christ's sorrow must surely have reached its pinnacle on the cross when He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Becoming sin on our behalf meant that, on the cross, Jesus was temporarily separated from the Father, a reality He had never experienced. None of us can ever imagine the level of grief that Jesus encountered at that time. Yet, out of Christ's commitment to do the Father's will and to demonstrate His love for us, we are also reminded that Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

When we realize that our Savior Jesus knows sorrow in its fullest dimension, we can look to Him and expect His help when sorrow comes into our lives.

Hebrews 2:17-18, Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:14-16, Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 5:8, Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

COMFORT IN SORROW LINKED TO GOD'S PROMISES

The best time to prepare for sorrow is before it arrives. This is accomplished as you live each day with Christ as the focus of your life and also trust God's Word to be the perfect and never-failing guide for every aspect of life and relationships.

In addition to verses already mentioned in this study, the following passages indicate the many promises that are foundational to someone growing in God's grace who becomes biblically equipped to endure sorrow without sinning.

1 Corinthians 10:13, No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Psalms 145:14, The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

Philippians 1:6, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:28-30, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Philippians 3:12-14, Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Colossians 3:1-4, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Peter 5:6-8, Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil

prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Romans 8:35-39, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalms 55:22, Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Psalms 23:4, Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Philippians 4:4-9, Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

See also [Joyful and Worry Free](#)

PRAYER AND SORROW

Sorrow is rarely faced alone. Many people realize this as they seek comfort from others in their time of need or, on the other hand, attempt to give comfort when others sorrow. Relief from fellow humans can be beneficial but will never reach the depth of our being as does communicating with God Almighty. Divine communication is accomplished through prayer and, as has been stated, by incorporating scriptural truth into our lives. When we pray, we are following the example of Jesus who prayed often and continued to do so when in deep sorrow.

Prayer is an integral part of a believer’s response to life’s difficulties and potential sorrow.

Colossians 4:2, Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

As a believer, you may be unsure how to pray when you are in sorrow, so pray anyway. The Holy Spirit will help you.

Romans 8:26-27, Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

To help you develop a meaningful prayer practice, see [A Prayer Pattern to Help Structure Your Life](#)

BLESSINGS OF SORROW

Even though no one welcomes sorrowful experiences, the Lord has a far-reaching plan for times of sorrow that includes His glory, one’s spiritual growth, and potential help to others. We cannot fully know or recognize the wisdom of His plans, but we can trust Him implicitly.

Isaiah 55:8-9, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

Our times of sorrow are, actually, trials that God can use to strengthen us in Him and develop Christ-likeness in our lives.

Romans 5:3-5, More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The linkage between trials and sorrow is evident. For further help and encouragement, see these studies:

[Don’t Lose Heart](#)

[God is Faithful](#)

[God’s Purposes in His Children’s Trials](#)

[Hope: From One Friend to Another](#)
[Testimony—My Trials Can Help Others](#)
[The Three Victories in Trials](#)
[Trials ... God's Pathway for Growth and Grace](#)
[Trusting in God in Trials Out of Our Control](#)

One of the clearest benefits of going through sorrow and receiving comfort from the Lord is how the Lord uses our experiences to help others and lead them to God's comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

SORROWS IN RELATIONSHIPS

As many of us realize, there are many sorrows that can occur in the realm of relationships. When we cause others to sorrow due to our sinful self-centeredness, we are to confess our sins to the Lord and ask others who have been harmed to forgive us.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 3:12-13, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Sometimes, others will sin against you and, in the process, create sorrow in your life. To make matters worse, they sometimes have no intention of asking for your forgiveness. When this estrangement persists, your response is clearly defined in Scripture, which is indicated in the following two passages.

Luke 6:27-28, But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

1 Peter 3:9, Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

For a comprehensive study on biblical forgiveness, see [Forgiveness: The Impossible Possibility](#)

SORROW IN THIS LIFE ONLY

Sorrow is inevitably part of life. Sorrow, however, is really not the issue ... a believer's response to sorrow is the key to realize God's peace and joy even during times of sorrow. In the meantime, believers can look forward to the time in which sorrow will be no more. That time will last forever as believers will be in the presence of the Lord enjoying the new heaven and new earth in the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:1-4, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

In light of the above passage, God's children have eagerly prayed for centuries, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." In the meantime, believers are to live in a manner that honors our soon coming King. When sorrows come—no matter how long they may last—respond by turning to the Savior, praying, obeying God's Word, and trusting our loving, Heavenly Father.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

In the devotional classic, *Morning and Evening*, (March 8 readings) at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/morneve.d0308am.html>, the words of Charles Spurgeon speak to trials, sorrow, and God's faithfulness—*God's people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. ... It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honour*

are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the part of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have His presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach the kingdom, it will more than make amends for the much tribulation through which they passed to enter it. ...It is well for us if, while the flesh mourns over trials, our faith triumphs in divine faithfulness.

Recommended devotional book by Randy Alcorn: **90 Days of God's Goodness, Daily Reflections that Shine Light on Personal Darkness** (Multnomah Books, © 2011 by Eternal Perspectives Ministry).

The book is available from the Eternal Perspectives website (<http://www.epm.org>) and is also available as an e-book from Amazon.

An excerpt from the book can be read at: http://www.epm.org/static/uploads/downloads/1st_chapter_90_Days_of_Gods_Goodness.pdf