

633 What Can I Do about Dark Days?

Phil Sanders

God's Answers to Life's Questions

Have you ever felt that the rug has been pulled out from under your feet? Dark days, disappointments, grief, and heartache come to all of us. But that doesn't mean that life is all bad. God can help you through blues. Stay with us and we'll see what God can do. Today we're asking the question, "What can I do about dark days?" Life can be very difficult to handle. It is full of disappointments and rough roads. It can leave us hurting and confused and disheartened. But we should not think that in the midst of our hurts and disappointments that God somehow has forgotten us or does not love us. I have always loved this little poem by Robert Browning Hamilton: "I walked a mile with Pleasure, She chattered all the way; But left me none the wiser, For all she had to say. I walked a mile with Sorrow And ne'er a word said she; But, oh, the things I learned from her When Sorrow walked with me!" Pain and sorrow can teach us things that will help us become what God desires.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:11-12, "I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them." It is not a question of if dark days come but when. Time and chance overtake us all. It usually happens when we least expect it. Tragedy is usually an interruption that takes our breath away and leaves us stumbling through the motions. Befuddled and distressed, we are never more aware of our need for God and His love.

When dark days come, please don't get it into your mind that God dislikes you or is picking on you. Good and bad come to all of us. Sometimes the best man wins, but sometimes he loses. Life is not always fair. We all make mistakes, we all lose loved ones, we all have illnesses, we all get left out, and no one can be perfect at everything. Dark days are hard, but we don't have to let them overcome us. We don't have to give in to a defeated spirit or a discouraged heart. We can learn the great lessons of life from the heartaches we face.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:2-4, "It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes *it* to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure." We may indeed learn our most valuable lessons through our mistakes and heartaches. One important lesson for us all is to know that we won't live forever. This life can quickly come to an end. James said in James 4:13-15, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" Today is really all we possess; let's make the most of it. Let's live it for the Lord with joy and thanksgiving in our hearts. Let's live with His will in mind. Let's make every day the best day possible, because we have no assurance that tomorrow will come.

Dark days teach us that our lives make a difference. How we live matters. When you go to the funeral of a friend, you might hear many things about that person that touches your life. The good they did and the people they helped uplift your spirit and encourage you to live a better life. Sometimes a person dies who is a rascal. You say in your heart, "I don't want my life to end up like that." The house of

mourning teaches us that how we live and how we serve matters. In the seventies, there was a popular saying that went around expressing this important truth: "This is the beginning of a new day. The Lord has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it, or I can use it for good. What I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something I have traded for it. I want it to be gain: not loss... good... not evil... success: not failure... in order that I may not regret the price I paid for it." We are each building our lives for eternity. Surely we want our lives to be a blessing to our families and a glory to God!

When tragedy strikes, turn through the pages of your Bible. Find those marked verses that give hope and promise. Too often we read those passages and smile. Now read them and claim them as your own. Believe them with all your heart. God never bears false witness; He is the God of truth. When I am hurting, here are some passages that help me. 2 Chron. 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." Isa. 49:15-16 "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of *My hands*; Your walls are continually before Me." Isa. 66:2 "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Mt. 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." John 14:1-3 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ^{3a}If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also." Rom. 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." Rom. 8:37-39 "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph. 3:20-21 "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." Phil. 4:19 "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." And last 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." These give me hope, hope that fills the soul.

When tragedy strikes, turn your heart to God not away from Him. He is not unaware of your pain and confusion. You can be assured that not a bird falls outside the knowledge of God. He sees and knows every detail. Jesus said in Matthew 10:29-31, "Are not two sparrows sold for a [£]cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." The problems you are facing are well within his view. He

hasn't forgotten you. Peter said in 1 Peter 4:12-14, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." Peter further says in 5:8-11, "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen." God will see you through this and every trial you face, and in the end you'll be stronger for it.

When tragedy strikes, pray earnestly. When the Lord Jesus faced His harshest night, He spent it praying. He cried out for the will of God to be done. His prayer that fateful night has blessed humanity for two thousand years. Through prayer we can pour our heart and our requests out to our Father in heaven. He will hear and will answer our prayers. David spoke of God's answer to his prayers in Psalm 18:1-6, "I love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me, And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me. The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears." God will hear you too, my friend, if you are faithful to Him. Call to Him for help and deliverance. He will come to your side to help you through the roughest moments. God doesn't take every tear away, but He does help us to bear our burdens. God promises never to let a problem overwhelm us so that we cannot bear it. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." So when we ask, God hears; when we seek, He helps us find; and when we knock, He opens the door.

When tragedy strikes, weep in your loss but rejoice in the Lord and in the love of good people. Remember that Paul's advice in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, rejoice" came from a prison cell. Paul did not know whether he would live or die. You'll remember that he appealed to Caesar, and Caesar might not let him live. But even in that sorrow Paul could say in Philippians 1:21-23, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ,

for *that* is very much better." Paul was a winner whether he lived or died, even though he was in jail. He could rejoice, however, in the wonderful promises of God. **Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's** (Rom. 14:7-9). For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. He hasn't abandoned you, but He can and does take the hurts of life and make good out of them (Rom. 8:28).

My friend, I don't know where you are in your walk with God, but I know that how close you are with the Lord will make all the difference in how you deal with tragedies. In Christ we have hope; and without Christ, we are stumbling through life in the dark. With Christ, we have comfort and help; and without Christ we have only our own resources. With Christ we have a friend; but without Christ, we are horribly alone. Each of us faces a tragedy now and then, but the tragedy will not get the best of us if we are facing it with the help of the Lord. The best thing you can do today, my friend, is to walk close to Jesus Christ, to hold to his hand as you walk through the valley. He loves you and He will be there all the way.

There are two kinds of people: those who are in the midst of trouble and those who will face it. Regardless of which category you fit, you need to have a close relationship with the Lord. The apostle Paul who went through so many difficulties wrote in 2 Timothy 4:16-18, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen." When all else fails, the Lord will be with His faithful people who love Him and serve Him. Are you one of them? Do you love the Lord with all your heart and soul? Have you put your faith and trust in Him and His word? Have you repented of your sins and have you been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins? The best day for you to be obedient to the Lord Jesus is today. Don't be like the person who only thinks of God when he needs Him. Don't be the fellow who waits until life goes sour before he realizes that God can be a part of it. Many years ago, a friend of mine obeyed the gospel and began living the Christian life in earnest. Each time I'd talk to him, he would say, "Phil, it just gets better and better." My friend it does just get better and better. But it can't get better unless you start living it for real. Many Christians play at their Christianity, never taking it seriously. I find these are the people who have the hardest time with struggles. They often fall away from the Lord at the first sign of trouble. If they had really gotten close to the Lord, they would have seen His strength and help. As it is they flirted with their Christianity and never got close to God. Don't make that mistake, my friend. You have opportunity to have a great relationship with Lord; take that opportunity! Give it your very best and grow close. You too will be saying to me, "Phil, it just gets better and better." May the Lord help you to take your faith seriously.

Copyright 2006, Phil Sanders
Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747

phil@God-answers.org

www.tv.God-answers.org