

**Open your Bibles to Hebrews 13:20-21.**

- That's where we'll begin today as we resume our thinking from last week on How to Deal With Sorrow.
- This sermon is "Part Two" on this weighty subject.

**Last Lord's Day we considered the things we need to remember and remind ourselves when sorrow comes knocking at our door.**

- My focus was more mental in that sermon. Keeping our thinking straight about God and His love, goodness, sovereignty, and promises.
- But this week will be more hands on. More of a "What to DO." (Practical wisdom from Scripture.)
- And when I say "practical" I don't mean that right thinking isn't practical. All we do with our hands is predicated on what we believe in our hearts.
- Instead, I mean "actionable stuff." Things we must put into practice in our DOING when we suffer.

**The heart and mind are still very much involved, though. Don't misunderstand me.**

- Both our believing and our doing are absolutely necessary. They can be distinguished, but not divorced.
- So this sermon piggybacks on what was said last week, because our thinking about God has to be straight or we'll never have the foundation to practically do what we must when sorrow comes.

**Brothers and sisters, when we grieve we must continue to live. We must press on.**

- We must also humble ourselves to accept help.
- And we must continue to live AS CHRISTIANS.

Continue to live the life of faith as we pray, worship, and wait upon the Lord.

- These are the things I want us to consider this morning.

**Now, this is a tall order. It really is.**

- Pressing on with life, accepting help from our brothers and sisters, and continuing in faith IS HARD when grief has sapped all strength from you.

- Anyone who has ever suffered much can testify to this.

- But we have the Almighty God, who is FOR US and promises to help us!

- And anyone who has come out the other side of suffer can testify to this as well.

**So this morning, I hope to set useful, biblical instruction before you, as well as the promise of God's help.**

- And, by God's grace, may we remember to practice what we hear today, when hardship comes to each of us, as it most certainly will.

- May God bless the preaching of His Word.

**At this time, I'll pray. And then we'll begin.**

**(PRAY)**

***Our Heavenly Father,***

***•We praise you for speaking to us in your Word. It's comforting to know that we have a sure and steady foundation to stand upon.***

- *So we ask now, would you teach us?*
- *Your Word is real. And it truth. Would you make it real in our hearts and cause us to see that it is pure truth?*
- *By your Holy Spirit, apply the Word to our hearts and teach us to honor you.*
- *Cause us to believe again in your promises. Cause us to again see your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *Work in us today and transform us and prepare us and teach us how to bear our griefs in the way that pleases you.*
- *Have mercy upon us.*
- *We ask these things in Jesus' Name and for His sake.*
- *Amen.*

## **1.) Let's begin by taking a look at Hebrews 13:20-21.**

- Before we read, you should know that this is a benediction. A “good word.” A blessing from God to His People spoken through the mouth of one of His People.
- What we're about to read is an inspired prayer. A prayer that is certainly according to the will of God.
- So it's not wishful thinking. And it's not the Apostle hoping for the best. It's equal to a promise for the People of God, expressed as a prayer for them.
- What we're about to read, God WILL DO for those who trust in Jesus Christ:
  - *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus*

Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**The Almighty God, who raised our Lord from the dead, WILL equip you with everything you need to do His will.**

- All knowledge, hope, endurance, understanding, faith, and every other grace will be given to you by God.

- He WILL work in you what is pleasing in His sight. He'll work love for Himself, faith in His promises, and strength and ability to walk in His ways.

- And He will do so through Jesus Christ, who intercedes on your behalf, mediating to you all the blessings of the New Covenant, which He purchased for you in His life, death, and resurrection.

- Christ will mediate these things to you, according to the will of His Father, as your Great High Priest.

- They are yours! And you shall have them!

- Maybe not all at once. And not without measure. And not in one shot. But God will give them to you through Jesus Christ. For the will of God cannot fail. And our Lord cannot fail as our Priest and Head.

- HEAR ME, CHRISTIAN: You will receive all necessary help from God, that you might do His will and be pleasing in His sight.

**Now, what does this have to do with our topic this morning?**

- Well, as I've said already, there are things we need to DO as we attempt to handle sorrow in a godly way.

- But we're weak and sinful. Even more so when we grieve. Temptation abounds and weakness is made all the more known to us.

- But this blessing from God is the foundation for your attempts to honor and obey Him in the midst of sorrow.

- HE WILL HELP YOU!

- He will equip you, work in your heart, strengthen you, and give you every grace you need, through Jesus Christ, for His glory.

### **We've got to know that ahead of time!**

- And that's because the entire Christian life is one lived BY FAITH. It's by faith in God's promises that we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

- Apart from faith, we're working in the flesh and relying upon our own resources. And that's a recipe for sin and failure.

- But by faith, we will overcome and please the Lord! So we've got to start with believing that He'll help us.

### **Everything I'm going to say this morning is based on God's promises here.**

- I'm assuming that God will be faithful to His Word and work in us who believe in Christ, so we may do His will in spite of our suffering.

- And I'm also assuming that we'll be crying out to Him daily in prayer, asking Him to keep His promises and help us.

### **He will help. He has promised.**

- So let's begin: What should we do when we suffer?

### **2.) First, we have to keep living.**

- We have to keep pressing on with life, doing what needs doing, striving to obey God, and not allowing

ourselves to wallow in grief and self-pity.

- You must not let your emotions run your life. The way you feel cannot dictate what you do. (It will effect what you do. But you can't allow your grief to determine what you will attempt.)

- As the Puritans would say, we must not “over-grieve.”

**A good example of this principle is found in Genesis 23:2-3:**

- “And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead...”

- Abraham's wife, Sarah, died. He loved her. And so, he mourned and grieved and wept for her.

- His suffering was real. His grief was real. It was good and right that he mourned.

- But notice that Abraham didn't allow himself to be consumed by grief. The text says that eventually “Abraham rose up from before his dead...”

- And he then began to arrange Sarah's burial.

**I think there is an example here for us to imitate:**

- Abraham took care of what needed taking care of.

- He knew that he had responsibilities and obligations that hadn't gone away, even though his wife had died.

- I'm sure he grieved long after he “rose up.” The tears weren't over. Long nights were in his future.

- But, nevertheless, he didn't permit himself to sit in a perpetual state of uninterrupted mourning.

- HE GOT UP AND CONTINUED LIVING!

**We actually go on to read in Genesis 25:1 that he remarried.**

- Now, how soon after the death of Sarah that was, I'm not sure. But Abraham definitely did not allow himself to be destroyed by sorrow.

- He pressed on and learned how to live with loss.

**Brothers and sisters, when tragedy strikes, we must not allow ourselves to grieve as hopeless people who are now allowed to behave as if the world and life has stopped.**

- And that's ultimately because life is about GOD and honoring Him.

- Life is not about the sorrow that has come upon us. Life doesn't ultimately center upon us. Life is about GOD.

- So we have to recognize that there are godly obligations and biblical responsibilities that cannot be ignored or abandoned, even as we're grieving.

- And we have to know that there is indeed a proper time to begin to live again, moving forward with life, even if we never fully "get over" our loss.

- Tragedies are PART of life. But they cannot become our lives. And that's because glorifying God is the ultimate aim of life.

**You know, I've watched people ruin their lives because they refuse to attempt to "get on with life."**

- They begin to neglect the spiritual disciplines and stop coming to church.

- They stop working and lose their jobs. Stop physically taking care of their homes. Start ignoring their spouse

and children. Refuse to serve others but remains fixated on their suffering.

- I've watched people let everything around them fall into ruin because they are so focused on their sorrow and won't attempt to live or walk in God's ways.

**And it is a SIN to over-grieve.**

- To live as if there is no joy to be had again is to believe that there is no joy in knowing God.

- To refuse to obey God's Word is to obey your feelings above God. That's idolatry of pain.

- And this might sound harsh, but over-grieving is selfish. Such a person is living as if he and his pain are the only things that matter.

- Such a person is ignoring everyone and everything around him.

- Such a person is not even attempting to love God or neighbor. That's selfishness.

- Over-grieving is wicked. The one suffering should have our sympathy. But he must also repent of neglecting God and neighbor, creating an idol, and blaspheming God.

**The big thing I want you to remember in this is that our obligations to God and neighbor don't go away because we're full of sorrow.**

- God's commandments abide. Nothing makes them bend or go away.

- And if we choose to not walk in them, instead choosing to wallow in grief and self-pity, then we're sinning.

- And to compound sin on top of grief will just lead to



more suffering and sin until repentance happens.

- Friends, we must approach life according to God's Word!

**Now let me make a clarification at this point:**

- Sometimes you're actually unable to do anything because of grief.

- And there is a time for that. Especially early on.

- Remember, "Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her..."

- But that level of uncontrollable sobbing, deep and constant brain fog, and nonstop mental numbness, doesn't last forever. Usually, it's short-lived.

- I'm talking about months or years down the road from the initial shock.

- The sadness is still there for sure. That might never completely go away. But the actual INABILITY to do anything but mourn is gone.

**But sometimes people will try to make excuses for their over-grieving.**

- The most common one I've heard is "I can't."

- People will claim an absolute inability to obey the Lord. And they'll attribute that inability to grief.

- But we know that, biblically, the only people who actually CANNOT obey the Lord are the unregenerate.

- But we're Christians, aren't we? So we actually CAN.

- We've been born again, given new hearts and desires, made new in Christ, and promised help by God.

- So, yes, we can.

**In reality, "I can't" usually means "I don't want to."**

- Or it means “I don’t THINK I can and I’m afraid to try.”
- Or it might even mean “I won’t.”

**Let me illustrate this in a pretty extreme way:**

- Even in your deepest sorrow, if someone told you that they were going to murder someone you love if you don’t get up and go to work, you’d get up.

- Now apply that to whatever else it is that you think you can’t do. (Showering, eating, cleaning the home, playing with your children, going to church, praying, tending to your spouse, etc.)

- I’ve seen people claim to be too depressed to engage in spiritual disciplines, worship, counseling sessions and the like, but they still go to work each day.

- Why is that? It’s because they know that **THEY MUST GO TO WORK** or they’ll have no food or home.

- Such people are **CHOOSING** to not do the other things that they ought.

**But, friends, we must CHOOSE daily to do what God commands of us, IN SPITE OF our sorrow.**

- This will be work. No use lying about it. It’ll be hard. But we must choose righteousness.

- We never cease to be responsible moral agents. Remember that.

- And we must remember that God **PROMISES HIS HELP!** So we must resolve to at least try and rely on Him to give us strength!

**Now let me issue a warning:**

- I watched a former member of our church over-grieve to her own destruction.

- She had many legitimately bad things in her life. But she chose to live in the dark instead of pushing on.
- And her over-grieving made everything worse.
- She neglected public and private worship and her soul shriveled up.
- She neglected her spouse and, coupled with his own grievous sin, ended up divorced.
- She neglected her brothers and sisters in the church and isolated herself.
- She neglected to care for her body which led to increased feelings of worthlessness.
- She neglected to care for her house and let it degrade into filth which led to further isolation.
- She neglected sound, biblical counsel and accountability which ultimately led to her excommunication.

**Over-grieving did her no favors. It ruined her life.**

- It was easier than trusting God and submitting to His Word. But it destroyed her.
- Let this be a warning to us.
- We must not allow ourselves to be governed by our emotions.
- We must push on with life, trust the Lord to help us, and attempt to live according to His Word.

**And let me encourage you: YOU CAN DO THIS!**

- Remember God's blessing in Hebrews 13.
- For Christ's sake, God will work what pleases Him in you, and equip you with all you need so that you may do His will.
- The power of Almighty God goes before you and

stands behind you. You need only to determine to attempt to obey, and cry out to Him for help.

- You can do this. Even if it's a slow process (and it usually will be), press on and honor the Lord.

### **3.) A second thing we have to do when sorrow comes is lean on our brothers and sisters.**

- Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

- Every Christian is commanded to help their brothers and sisters in all kinds of difficulties, whether they be spiritual or temporal.

- In other words, we're to help one another. In whatever way we can, as we see needs, we're to help.

**2 Corinthians 1:4 says that God** "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."

- One of the many purposes for our own suffering is that we might help others in their suffering by comforting them with the truths that God comforted us with.

**And 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says,** "Therefore encourage one another with these words."

- Those who see their fellow Christians grieving the death of Christian loved ones are to encourage them with the reality that the dead shall rise when Christ returns.

- More broadly applied, we're to encourage our sorrowful brothers and sisters with the Word of God.

**Friends, when you're full of sorrow, you need to remember that God has given you brothers and sisters in the church.**

- He's given you a community who knows you, loves you, and sympathizes with you in your pain.

- And He's given these fellow believers to you SO THAT they can help you when you suffer.

- He has put them through suffering so they can be a blessing to you.

- He has commanded them to help you tangibly and spiritually and to encourage you with the Word and pray for you.

- This is the will of God for each local church.

### **SO LET THEM!**

- Let your brothers and sisters help you, as God has commanded them to do.

### **A lot of us aren't very good at this.**

- We try to deal with everything on our own.

- We don't want people to see us cry.

- We don't want to ask for help.

- We think it's a negative thing to admit weakness.

- That it's a sign of immaturity or lack of character or "being a baby" to look for help or even accept it when offered.

- But that's not true. We all need help sometimes.

- It's not a sin to be weak. It's not immature to need help the waters of sorrow have went over your head.

**Even our Lord Jesus needed to be ministered to by the angels in the wilderness.**

- Even He needed to be strengthened by an angel when He was in the depths of sorrow in Gethsemane.
- Hear me: YOU'RE NOT STRONGER THAN JESUS!
- It's OK and simply human to need help.

### **SO LET YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS HELP.**

- Humble yourself and admit that you're not as strong as you want everyone to think you are.
- Let them weep with you as you weep.
- Let them pray for you when you feel like you can't pray for yourself.
- Let them encourage your soul with the Word of God.
- Let them tangibly help you as you sometimes physically need help when tragedy comes. (Meals, house cleaning, watching your kids for a time, paying for things, etc.)

**Think about this:** If God commands us to help one another, then aren't we implicitly commanded to allow others to help us when we need it?

- And if God commands us to be humble, then aren't we to admit when we need help and ask for it?
- I think that all follows. I don't see how it doesn't.
- If my brother is help bear my burdens, then I've got to let him grab some of the weight.
- And if the weight is too heavy for me to bear, I've got to call upon my brother to help me lift it.

### **Let your spiritual family help you, Christian.**

- That's one of the glories of the Church.
- God has brought us all together, born by His Spirit into one family.

- God has gifted each of us in various ways, that we might serve one another.
- The church is so much more than a weekly worship gathering, as important as that is. It is designed by God to be and function as a family, under His Fatherhood.

**I beg you, when sorrow assails you, don't run from your family.**

- Don't ignore the calls and texts.
- Don't shut the door in their faces.
- Don't refuse the offers for help.
- Don't shy away from talking to them about what's happened in your life.
- Let them in. Let them see. Let them encourage, cry, and pray with you. Let them help you, however they can.

**Don't hinder your siblings in obeying the Lord.**

- And don't be so foolish as to think you don't need help.
- Agree with God's Word that you're weak. And bless His Name for giving you a family in Christ.

**If you isolate yourself, you're hurting yourself. And you're making yourself a target for the Devil.**

- Satan loves to prey on isolated sheep.
- Think of how a lion hunts: They like stragglers that are away from the herd. That's an easy kill.
- And you're sheep. And Satan is "like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

**When you're all alone and won't let anyone in, who**

## **will encourage you?**

- Who will prompt you to pray and look to the Word?
- Who will push you to get back into the life of the church?
- Who will be there to cry with you?
- NOBODY.
- You'll be left all by yourself. And, sadly, it'll be your own doing. You'll suffer at your own hand.
- And, let's be honest, none of us fare well when left to our own devices.

## **The language of the Church in the NT is the language of a FAMILY.**

- “Lone wolf Christianity” is a myth.
- Even when you're in the depths of woe, it's still a myth.
- The suffering is yours, indeed. And you will bear the largest share of it.
- But you must let your brothers and sisters carry the little parts that they can.
- So lean on them and accept the help God offers to you through them.

## **4.) Third, we must pray honestly.**

- Brothers and sisters, when you're in the throes of agony, CRY OUT TO GOD.
- Pour out your soul to the Lord. Hold nothing back. Lay your whole world on Him.
- He can take it! He is the Almighty God.
- And He actually gives you warrant to express how you actually feel in your sorrow.



**There are things in the Psalms that I would think were sin to say to God if they weren't given to me as SCRIPTURE THAT I'M SUPPOSED TO PRAY AND SING.**

- Let me read some examples to you:
- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” (Psalm 22:1-2)
- “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1-2)
- “Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1)
- “Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?” (Psalm 44:23-24)

**Did you know that you're allowed to pray these things?**

- The Psalms are brutally honest about suffering.
- And God gave us the Psalms to direct us in prayer.
- God is telling us to TELL HIM HOW WE FEEL.
- It's as if He says, “I know you're thinking and feeling it. So here's how you say it in a way that doesn't offend me.”

**Now, let me be clear:** Don't accuse Him of wrongdoing. Don't blaspheme.

- But you are absolutely permitted to BE HONEST WITH HOW YOU FEEL.

- Tell Him you're confused. Tell Him you feel like He's far away, punishing you, distant, has turned His back on you, has forsaken you, and however else you feel.

- TELL HIM! He wants you to tell Him.

### **And ask Him to help you!**

- In almost all of the Psalms of Lament, there are cries for help and strength and salvation.

- Tell Him how you feel. But don't stop there. Ask Him to help.

- Argue with Him. Appeal to His covenant promises given to you in Christ and plead with Him to keep them.

- Appeal to the glory of His Name and that He would be dishonoring Himself if He doesn't keep His Word to you.

- Appeal to His character as your Father and ask Him to be your Father.

- Cry out to Him, Christian! He's listening.

### **Who else are you going to tell this stuff?**

- Who else can actually understand exactly how you feel?

- Your friends can try. But only He really gets it. For only He knows you better than yourself.

- Only Christ fully understands the depths of human suffering on every level. For He experienced it.

- Who better, then, to cry out to than your Lord who is the all-knowing God and also "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"? (Isaiah 53:3)

**You know, I wonder how many of us have ever**

## **really prayed.**

- What I mean is this: How many of us have come before the Throne of Grace and absolutely emptied our souls before the Lord?

- How many of us have learned that we, for Christ's sake, have liberty to approach God as a child would his father and say,

- “Father, this hurts! I don't know why you do the things you do! You're not evil, but this hurts! Where are you? Why do I feel like you've left me alone to die? Why won't you wake up and help me? You're holy. You're not a liar. You've made me promises in Christ. **SO DO SOMETHING!**”

**Pray, Christian. Even when you don't want to. Especially when you don't want to. Even when it's the thousandth time about the same hurt.**

- Because when we really, honestly pray, though things might not get better in our circumstances, I can testify from Scripture and experience that the Apostle wasn't lying in Philippians 4:6-7.

- A peace that you can't fully explain will come. Maybe not at first. Maybe not for a while. But keep praying.

- And He will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. He will hold you. He will preserve you.

- As with the Widow of Zarephath, the Lord will give you just enough each day to sustain you as you cry out to Him.

- The Lord will do His work. **HE IS NOT A LIAR!**

**And how comforting it is to know that your prayers are mediated by the Lord Jesus Christ!**

- He takes them, removes whatever shouldn't be in them, and makes them acceptable to our Father.
- He takes your prayer and pleads on your behalf with you. He Himself ensures that you are heard.
- Hear me: Heaven is not deaf to your cries for help. Because the Father is never deaf to the Son.
- And you who trust in the Son are IN HIM.
- So pray!

### **5.) Lastly, you must wait. Wait for relief.**

- Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"
- Waiting is hard. It takes patience. And sorrow hurts.
- But God calls us to wait upon Him.
- Relief will come. Not when you want it. Because we want it right now. But God says to wait for Him.
- Peace will come. Maybe not in the measure you'd hoped for. Because we want all our pain taken away. But God says to wait for Him.
- It will be in His time and His way. But He will come to your rescue. He will bring peace. And He will grant you relief.
- But you must trust and wait in the meantime. Diligently striving to honor Him, crying out to Him, receiving His help through His People, and waiting for Him to work.

### **Let me be honest with you: Maybe the relief never fully comes in this life.**

- Help will come. But you might carry scars and lingering pain that comes and goes until you die.
- Some wounds are never fully healed in this life. And you never "get over it." You just learn to live with it,

trusting the Lord.

**But, dear Christian, let me remind you that a day is coming, and sooner than you think, when you'll realize that you've not cried for 10,000 years.**

- A day will come when darkness is a distant memory, and you have only a faint recollection of pain and loss.

- A day is coming when there is no more promise of relief, for all will be perfect and suffering past.

- For in the land where our King dwells, sorrow is banished. And that good country is our destiny.

**As our brother Jason Roberts often reminds me, "All things are coming to an end."**

- That includes your suffering. And all sorrow.

- It's coming to an end. God's purpose for His People IS NOT that sorrow should always exist. It's temporary.

- When we die, or our Lord comes again, it's over for us.

- Old griefs are gone. Future grief is an impossibility. And all our wounds will be healed as we look Jesus full in His wonderful face.

**One of the glories of the Gospel is that Christ has purchased our eternal peace.**

- Heaven is ours. Eternal life is ours.

- Splendor and glory and a suffering-less existence is our future.

- Having peace with God by the blood of Christ, we will have peace in every regard forever.

- Our God is not a God of half-measures.

- We will receive the fullness of peace. The fullness of

relief. The fullness of joy.

- It's just a matter of when. It's never "if." For our Lord Jesus Christ has merited and purchased it for us.

**We may have relief now in this life. I fully believe that. We must wait upon the Lord.**

- But even more than hoping for help on earth, we must set our eyes on eternity and wait with faith, rejoicing that all things are coming to an end.

- When all is dark here, set your mind on the glory that is to come.

**6.) In closing, I recognize that I've set a lot before you this morning.**

- The path of sorrow is long. And enduring it in a godly manner is difficult. None of this is easy.

- But let me remind you that God's blessing rests upon you who are in Christ.

**So hear His blessing.**

- Be encouraged.

- And set yourself to honor Him in your pain.

- "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

(Hebrews 13:20-21)

