



~ GRIEF ~
A Time to Mourn

ECCLESIASTES 3:4

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GRIEF – A TIME TO MOURN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
I. GRIEF IS THE GOD-GIVEN CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE LOSSES THAT ACCOMPANY PAIN AND SUFFERING.	7
II. GRIEF EXPRESSES ITSELF THROUGH A VARIETY OF MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL FORMS.	11
III. GRIEF IS SUBMERGED IN A SEA OF HOPELESSNESS FOR THE NON-CHRISTIAN.	17
IV. THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST HAVE CUT THE ROOTS OF GRIEF.	21
V. GOD GIVES GRACE IN ORDER THAT GRIEF MAY BE GAIN AND NOT LOSS.	27
<i>Summary and application</i>	41

GRIEF – A TIME TO MOURN
Ecclesiastes 3:4

INTRODUCTION

1. A time to mourn – Ecclesiastes 3:4 – Weeping and mourning – The human emotions of sadness and happiness are a part of the sovereign design of God.
 - All of our activities are under divine control (Eccles. 3:1-8). Every aspect of life has its time.
 - All of our activities will not give meaning to life (Eccles. 3:9), a gray conclusion.
 - The meaning of the plan for time is known only to God (Eccles. 3:9-15).
2. What is grief? Grief is a divinely appointed consequence of the Fall of man. It is God’s way of reminding us that we do live in a fallen world, a world plagued by sin and death, and that we need Him.
3. Read page 11 in *A Grief Sanctified* by J. I. Packer. “Grief, then, is the inward desolation that follows the losing of something or someone we love – a child, a relative, actual or anticipated

life partner, a pet, a job, one's home, one's hopes, one's health, or whatever." (J. I. Packer, p. 11)

4. Packer goes on to note that "loved" is the key word in this definition. Why? Because "we lavish care and affection on what we love and those whom we love, and when we lose the beloved, the shock, the hurt, the sense of being hollowed out and crushed, the haunting, taunting memory of better days, the feeling of unreality and weakness and hopelessness, and the lack of power to think and plan for the new situation can be devastating."

- I. GRIEF IS THE GOD-GIVEN CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE LOSSES THAT ACCOMPANY PAIN AND SUFFERING.
- A. God grieves. He grieves over the sins of mankind and those of His children (Gen. 6:6; Psa. 78:40; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).
- B. Grief was first experienced when Adam and Eve suffered the loss of their intimate fellowship with God.
- Grief entered the human race when sin and death made their entrance.
 - Grief first manifested itself in the form of guilt, shame, and personal conflict.
- C. We grieve in response to death, the loss of life (Gen. 23:2; 48:7; 2 Sam. 19:1-2; Jn. 11:31; 16:20; Matt. 17:23; Phil. 2:27; 1 Thess. 4:13).
- D. We grieve over the sins and failures of our children and others (Gen. 26:35; Prov. 10:1; 17:25; 1 Sam. 16:1; 15:35; Job 2:13; 30:28; Dan. 10:2; Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:4).
- E. We will grieve when we take the human condition seriously (Eccl. 1:18; Rom. 9:2). The believer is to grieve over the spiritual condition of the lost.

- F. We grieve over the loss of prosperity and the hope of future prosperity (Matt. 19:22; Rev. 18:9, 11; Mal. 3:14).

- G. We can grieve voluntarily and as part of a ritual (Zech. 7:3; Matt. 6:16).

- H. We can grieve as we suffer the consequences of sin (Ex. 33:4; Lam. 1:5; Jer. 14:2; Amos 5:16; 8:10).

- I. Leaders will experience grief in their ministry on behalf of others (Ezek. 21:6; Heb. 13:17; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:21).

- J. Suffering for the sake of Christ can bring grief (1 Pet. 2:19).

- K. We grieve when we are separated from those that we love (Acts 20:38).

- L. We can grieve when people turn against us and become our enemies (Psa. 6:7; 13:2; 35:14; 42:9).

- M. We are to grieve over sin (Amos 6:6; Neh. 8:10, 11; Psa. 38:6; Matt. 5:4; Mk. 3:5; Jn. 21:17; Lk. 6:21, 24; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:7;

7:9; Jas. 4:9).

- Self-absorbed people do not grieve over sin.
- The spiritually blind do not see the gravity of sin.
- Sin-hardened hearts should bring grief to the godly.
- Grief over sin should lead to repentance.

II. GRIEF EXPRESSES ITSELF THROUGH A VARIETY OF MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL FORMS.

- A. Grief is like a fog that rolls in (e.g., San Francisco bay) and covers everything. One's thoughts become obsessed with the one you have lost. Your emotions become unpredictable and turbulent. You feel lonely and want to be left alone.
- B. Grief may be experienced with weeping, tears, deep emotional anguish, and loneliness (Psa. 11:28 - "My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Thy word." Psa. 22:1; 2 Sam. 19:1 - "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." Job 16:16 - "My face is flushed with weeping, and deep darkness is on my eyelids." Jer. 9:1-3 - Jeremiah's grief over the sin of Israel; Jer. 31:15; Mk. 5:38; 14:33; Jn. 11:31, 33).
- C. Grief may be a time of sleeplessness and/or much sleep and no appetite (2 Sam. 12:17 - David's grief over his ill child; Lk. 22:45 - "And when he rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow.").
- Grief is exhausting. It will wear you physically.
 - It is difficult to concentrate on anything but the person you have lost (or the thing you have lost, for that matter).

- The mind can become so active with memories that it just will not allow you to relax and rest.
 - It is an emotional, mental, and spiritual storm. It comes on in a fury, subsides, but leaves its impact for the rest of one's days.
- D. Grief may be accompanied by despair, regret, bitterness, and hopelessness (Mal. 2:13 - tears, weeping and with groaning because God did not regard Israel's offerings; 2 Cor. 2:5, 7 - "overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" i.e., hopelessness over the refusal of fellow believers to forgive; 1 Thess. 4:13, 2 Cor. 7:10 - "the sorrow of the world produces death").
- We should also think of Judas and his suicide. He was filled with such deep remorse that he took his own life.
 - We have seen this in the news or perhaps know about such a thing personally. One's grief over the death of a loved one may result in a suicide. Or grief over unsolved problems (e.g., at springtime in Alaska suicides increase. Springtime stirs up the thoughts of hope).
- E. Grief can be intensified by additional losses and sorrows (Phil. 2:27 - Paul's sorrow upon sorrow if Epaphroditus had died). Compounded grief can be overwhelming in nature

(e.g., death of the five Sullivan brothers aboard an aircraft carrier in WWII).

- We can probably tell our own stories of compounded grief. I can remember 1987 and the death of my father-in-law and the automobile accident of my son, Eric.

F. Grief may be accompanied by rejoicing (2 Cor. 6:10 - “as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.” Paul uses the language of rhetorical paradox to highlight the sufficiency of God in all situations).

- Paul lived with a multitude of griefs (e.g., Corinthian correspondence, divisions and feuds, denial of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, etc.). The Corinthian epistles are a lesson in “grief management.”
- But no sorrow could extinguish the flame of joy that burned brightly in Paul’s heart. He was a living example of how the joy of the Lord is to be one’s strength.
- Sorrow (trials, affliction) and joy are not mutually exclusive (Jn. 16:33).

G. The sorrows of grief may be mixed with disappointment, complaint, and anger at God (Jonah 4:1-3 - Jonah grieved over the loss of his creature comfort and became angry at God for withdrawing it; John 11:21, 31 - Mary and Martha became angry at Jesus for not arriving sooner to provide healing for their brother Lazarus).

- The psalms of the Old Testament (lament psalms) are filled with complaint and struggle.
- Israel's experience in the wilderness is an example of this. They pined for the good life in Egypt. They grieved over its loss and they complained. They became pathological complainers. Its malignancy led to their death.

H. It may be expressed through prayerful lament (book of Lamentations, Psalms 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 139, etc.). Lamentations is composed of five melancholic poems of mourning over the loss of Jerusalem (its destruction) and the Temple.

- Change is loss and loss means grief. For example, children can go into grief and depression over the divorce of their parents, or moving away from their neighborhood and friends. For some children grief becomes a way of life and they don't know what is happening.

- It is instructive to follow David in his prayers of lament. It will help us in learning how to express our emotions to God. We will consider this later.

III. GRIEF IS SUBMERGED IN A SEA OF HOPELESSNESS FOR THE NON-CHRISTIAN.

- A. All grief for the non-Christian is ultimately hopeless because of the absence of Jesus Christ in his life (1 Thess. 4:13 - “that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.” The “as” does not mean “as much as.”).
- Any sorrow that the believer in Jesus Christ may have over the loss of a loved one is unlike the hopeless despair that the heathen can only have.
 - Death is not loss for the believer but gain (Phil. 1:21).
 - The non-Christian does not live with the hope of a resurrection (Eph. 2:12). She did not/does not possess the one true hope, the Christian hope, which Christ validated by His resurrection.
 - Loss suffered in this life is without any eternal compensation for the unbeliever. And the greatest loss of all, namely, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life in Jesus Christ, will result in eternal pain and suffering.

B. This hopelessness can be masked and denied by living with false hopes (Psalm 115:1-8; Isa. 44:9-20, 50:11 - the little “fires” of unbelievers; Prov. 14:13 - “Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief”; Eccles. 7:1-6).

- Genuine happiness in life does not depend on circumstances.

Laughter may mask the pain of the soul but it cannot assuage it.

- The opera *Pagliacci, I* (The Players). *Early in Act I, Canio learns that Nedda, his wife, is unfaithful. He discovers she is having a love affair, but he does not know the identity of the man. Canio sings one of the great tenor arias in all opera, ‘Vesti la giubba,’ which expresses his tragic fate of playing a clown while his heart is breaking. This serves as a parable for the plight of man without God. Our world is playing while sitting in a pool of tears.*

C. Hell will be a place of eternal grief (Matt. 13:50- the wicked will be cast “into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Lk. 16:25; Rev. 20:14 - the second death, the lake of fire).

- Grief is a true reflection of hell (J. I. Packer), “where the ache of losing God and all good, including the good of community, will be endless.”
- Hell will be a place of eternal grief, unbounded by time, and filled with remorse, a sense of loss forever.

IV. THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST HAVE CUT THE ROOTS OF GRIEF.

A. Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3 – the Hebrew word for “grief” is *chali* (*from the verb chala, to be weak or sick*). He was a “man of sorrows.”). “It is not one sorrow or two that makes one a ‘man of sorrows,’ nor one meeting or two with grief that makes him the acquaintance of it.”

1. Jesus’ entire life was filled with pain and suffering. He grieved over the grief-stricken (John 11:35 - “Jesus wept.”). Jesus grieved over the hardness of heart of the Pharisees (Mk. 3:5).
 - Jesus was subject to all sinless human emotions. To deny this is to deny His full humanity. “Those who imagine that the Son of God was exempt from human passions do not truly and seriously acknowledge him to be a man.” (John Calvin)
 - Jesus was not cold and remote. Nor was He emotionally driven. The Gospels do not focus much attention on Jesus’ emotions (“Gospel narratives are very objective.”).
 - Mercy is the most frequently mentioned emotional response of Jesus (Matt. 20:34; Mk. 1:41; Lk. 7:13; Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32; Mk. 6:34, 8:2, 9:22).

- The tears of Jesus are mentioned in three places in the Gospels. He wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:44). He wept at Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7). He wept at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35).
- Jesus was deeply moved when He saw Mary and Martha and the Jews weeping. Why? Bereavement was the result of sin. He saw an example of what the Fall had done. He identified with the sorrowful (sympathy). He felt anger and sorrow within. Jesus was enraged at the evil of death (its “violent tyranny”). Jesus did not approach Lazarus’ tomb in uncontrollable grief. It was inwardly restrained fury.
- Jesus weeping at Lazarus’ tomb is significant from the standpoint that He was actually weeping over the general misery of the whole human race and burned with rage against the oppressor of men (B. B. Warfield). It is death that is the object of His wrath and behind death him who has the power of death, and whom he has come into the world to destroy (B. B. Warfield).
- Jesus stepped toward the tomb of Lazarus as the “champion who prepares for conflict.” It was an “open symbol of Jesus’ conquest of death and hell.”

- Here is also an instance of Jesus sympathizing with us and it was His love for us in our miserable condition (mercy) that took Him to the cross to slay the dragon of death.
 - *The whole earth to him was but ‘the valley of the shadow of death,’ and in these tears which were shed in his presence, he saw that ‘Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe, are brackish with the salt of human tears.’ (John Hutchison)*
- Jesus’ earthly life was lived not in despairing grief or in a mental state of depression. It was lived with the joyful anticipation of the defeat of sin and death. He was not habitually sorrowful (Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34). Children were attracted to Him. He attended a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. “Joy he had: but it was not the shallow joy of mere pagan delight in living, nor the delusive joy of a hope destined to failure; but the deep exultation of a conqueror setting captives free. This joy underlay all his sufferings and shed its light along the whole thorn-beset path which was trodden by his own feet.” (Jn. 15:11, 17:13) (B. B. Warfield)
- The “Man of Sorrows” was also “the Man of Joy.” Jesus was not an unhappy man. Yes, there was joy that was set before Him as He endured the cross, but there was a deep abiding joy that was the

deeper emotional current “derived from the realized presence of his Father and the consciousness that he is doing his work.” (F. W. Farrar)

2. Jesus grieved as He anticipated the drinking of the cup of God’s judgment for our sins (Matt. 26:39-45; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46; Jn. 12:27).
 - The mental sufferings of Jesus are most emphasized with reference to His sacrifice for our sins. Jesus’ walk through the valley of the shadow of death was one of overwhelming emotional intensity (Mk. 14:32-34). Jesus wrestled with powerful emotional currents as He anticipated the shame of the cross (Heb. 12:2).
 - Jesus was intensely distressed just thinking about what suffering He was to undergo on the cross (Lk. 12:50). “Floods lie before him under which he is to be submerged” (B. B. Warfield). See also John 12:27 - “Now my soul has become troubled.”
 - Consider the words used to describe Jesus’ agony of soul.
 - Jesus was not shrinking from physical suffering (the whipping, lacerations, betrayal, denial, and desertion). He was no coward flinching at the

thought of personal risk and pain. Jesus displayed mental and moral courage throughout His life. He was not afraid of pain, insult, and death. What brought Jesus the intense grief that He suffered in Gethsemane? The struggle of Jesus was due to the contents of the cup of suffering. He was about to drink from the cup of God's judgment for our sins and experience alienation from the Father. It was "spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the world. . . enduring the divine judgment which those sins deserved. It was the "exordium of the pains of hell themselves" (Calvin). "For it is God's wrath that is hell, as it is His favor that is heaven." (Calvin)

- B. Jesus Christ endured grief as He suffered the torments of being forsaken by the Father for our sins (Isa. 53:6; Mk. 15:33-41).
1. The judgment of God fell upon Jesus as He was dying for our sins.
 2. Jesus endured the abandonment of the Father in His death for our sins.
 3. The death of Jesus accomplished the complete payment for our sins.
 4. The death of Jesus opened a new and living way to God.

- C. Because Jesus bore our griefs and sorrows, we can live with hopeful, peaceful, and joyful grief (Jn. 16:22; 2 Cor. 4:8-18; 2 Cor. 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:13).
- D. God did not stand with His hands in His pockets and merely look upon our grief-stricken world. He entered it. He grieved with us. He suffered the greatest possible loss. Jesus Christ lost the sweetness of fellowship with His Father which He had enjoyed for all eternity. He grieved in the garden of Gethsemane. He grieved on the cross. He grieved that we may one day no longer grieve. He put the axe of God's judgment to the root of sin.

V. GOD GIVES GRACE IN ORDER THAT GRIEF MAY BE GAIN AND NOT LOSS. (Phil. 1:21 - “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”)

A. All genuine comfort comes from the God of all comfort who provides abundant resources for our time of grief (Lam. 3:21-23, 32-33). Grief is a favorable time to draw near to God, to talk to God, to learn from God. More is to be learned from adversity than pleasure (Eccles. 7:2).

- We must “call to mind” the hope that we have in God in our time of loss. For all is not loss. All is gain in God. “If He causes grief, then he will have compassion.”
- Our anchor in the storm of grief is God’s faithfulness. He keeps His promises. Israel’s loss was major. They were losing their city, their temple, their land, their homes, everything they cherished. Where was God?
- A funeral can be much more valuable than a birthday party. The sorrow of death makes us ponder spiritual reality. Laughter and pleasure can be narcotics making us forget, to our everlasting grief, the nature of life.

B. Grief must be seen as the opportunity for God to be exalted. Grief is a part of the sovereign design of God and belongs to the believer in Jesus Christ (Eccl. 3:4; 1 Cor. 3:22; 10:31).

- Context of 1 Corinthians 3:22 – God’s people must be regarded as fellow servants. In this line of thought the apostle tells the church “all things belong to you.” Even death advances the plan of God for the body of Christ.
- God works out His eternal purposes in our grief. “To die is gain.” “He who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39). Grief can accompany any loss that I suffer in this life. Those who experience loss of house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, farms for the Lord’s sake and for the gospel’s sake in the present age shall receive a hundred times as much in the age to come (Mk. 10:29-31).
- Joyful sacrificial living motivated by loving obedience to Jesus Christ will not go unrewarded. Any grief suffered in this life for the cause of Christ and the gospel will not go unrewarded. “Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:12).

- C. Grief can be sanctified by the presence of a loving, wise, and sovereign God. God’s purposes for our lives are not denied by bereavement and grief. God is at work through the variety of circumstances that surround us (Rom. 8:28-30).
- Grief does not have to be wasted. It does not have to be a time of meaningless sorrow. “Our part as Christians is not to forbid grief or pretend it is not there, but to maintain humility and practice doxology as we live through it.” (J. I. Packer, p. 12)
 - My loss is not without purpose. “Bereavement becomes a supreme test of the quality of our faith” (J. I. Packer, p. 12). My confidence must be placed in God who does all things well.
- D. Grief is the sanctuary in which we may worship God and commune with Him in an intimate way (Job 1:20-22; Psa. 39, 42, 55). Our desire for the exaltation of God in all things should frame all our sorrows, and transform our sorrows into a Christ-exalting, Holy Spirit-empowered, and God-honoring experience.
- Job is our example here (“may the name of the Lord be praised.”). Job had lost all his wealth. His children were dead.

- We also can learn much from the psalms of David as he grieved. His losses became a cathedral of praise. He trusted God in the midst of his pain. Take your emotional struggle with God to God. Tell Him what is bothering you. He already knows. But He wants you to talk to Him about it.
- E. Our grief should remind us that we live in a fallen world plagued by sin and death (Rom. 8:22-23). Therefore, it should not be allowed to control the Christian and distort reality (1 Cor. 7:30; Gen. 42:36). We must not interpret life from the shadows of grief.
- If you are not careful your sorrow can carry you out into a sea of despair. It can rule your life if you are not careful. All of life must be lived as the “not yet.” We must not allow legitimate living to carry us off course. We must live free of the control of the “now age.” Life is more than marriage. Life is more than grief. Those who mourn must remember that they will be comforted at the last day. Don’t be controlled by your emotions.
 - Ezekiel was told not to publicly grieve over the death of his wife. He had to keep his feelings of loss bottled up inside (Ezek. 24:15ff.). This was an extraordinary request the manner in which grief was expressed in Ezekiel’s day. He was to subordinate his grief to the purpose of his ministry (serving and obeying God).

- Some people embrace grief and make it a way of life. They can let it determine their decisions in life. They can adopt sadness as a way of life and become intoxicated on their own emotions. They shut other people out, etc.
- F. Our experience of grief can be a time for spiritual reflection, personal inventory and assessment, purging, purifying, repentance, and forgiveness (Jn. 15:1-7). For example, the intensity of my grief and the manner in which I express it may be indicative of misplaced values, a lack of spiritual maturity, and can reveal attitudes that have gone uncorrected by biblical truth.
- The loss of a loved one may uncover a greater love for the deceased than for God. The loss of a job may reveal a love of security and money that is greater than a love for God. The loss of a girlfriend may bring to light a love for oneself that exceeds one's love for God.
 - The loss of a family member's health may display my selfishness (anger mixed with grief). One may become angry that he or she has become inconvenienced (may have to take care of a paralyzed child).
 - One's grief can be mixed with anger for the deceased. For example, the attitude might be, "why did you have to die and leave me with all this to deal with?" (as in a suicide).

G. If your grief is mixed with regrets, remorse, or sorrow over sin(s) committed against the deceased, then go before God with confession of sin and look to Him for the grace to pay your debt of love to those who are still living (Matt. 5:4; Jas. 4:7-10).

- God’s discipline may produce grief (“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11)).
- Whether our loss is innocent suffering or the chastening of the Lord it can be redeemed by learning from it. The death of a loved one may be the occasion to wake you up to the brevity of life. It can be the occasion for the conversion of the lost (e.g., teenager who committed suicide).

H. Grief must not be allowed to dictate the future. For example, selling one’s house, changing jobs, immediate remarriage, major financial decision, shopping sprees, expensive vacations (debt producing), and unwise commitments cannot heal the hurt of grief. These things may provide a temporary anesthesia, but will not remove the reality of pain and suffering (1 Pet. 1:13 - “Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your

hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”; I Pet. 4:7).

- I. Grief is a process that must be allowed to run its course. It will take time and must be met with spiritual endurance and an understanding of what is happening (Deut. 34:8; Gen. 50:10-11). It will require a proper care of one’s body, a wise use of time, and the encouraging presence of God’s people (1 Cor. 12:26; Eph. 5:15-17; 1 Cor. 9:26-27, 6:20). Don’t excuse self-indulgence in the name of comforting oneself.
 - The storm of grief will abate. It will not go on indefinitely with the same intensity. But during the storm take care. It is a time of great stress. You will need sleep, some time alone, and some nutrition. You may become ill. Grief puts a great stress upon the immune system. You may catch a cold, develop headaches, insomnia, etc.
 - Sometimes grief can bring on death itself (e.g., older couples when experiencing bereavement may die within a relatively short time of one another).

- J. Becoming obsessed with thoughts about the deceased will hinder a God-honoring experience of grief. For example, creating a shrine (an untouched room), laying his or her

clothes on a chair at mealtime, etc., can delay a biblically healthy response to grief.

- K. Beware of those who will bring you bad counsel in your time of grief. Some will attempt to attribute grief to nature rather than to the design of God (e.g., “It is nature’s way of providing healing.”). Some will want to lecture you on your failures and sins rather than provide genuine comfort (e.g., Job’s friends who essentially said that all suffering is due to sin.). Some will want to make God the villain and you the victim (e.g., Job’s wife counseled regarding the unfairness of God, Job 2:9).
- Much bad theology and sentimentalism can show up in a time of bereavement and grief. We die and grieve like we live. Our inner-most thoughts are revealed. Not everyone goes to heaven when they die. Not every loss may have immediate and clear meaning. We live by faith, not explanations.
 - False teaching often makes its appearance at funerals. Be on guard. You will draw your comfort from God’s Word not from the vain imaginations of man.
- L. Grief is not a sign of spiritual weakness or a lack of hope in God (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Grief is a God-appointed response to the pain of loss suffered in a fallen world. Not everyone will grieve in the same way or for the same duration. We should not try to force certain expressions of grief on

others. We should not feign grief in order to manipulate others (Matt. 6:16; Joel 2:13 - “And rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness”).

- We are to grieve over sin (ours and others). A defection from God is akin to death. Genuine grief over sin cannot be paraded and used to try to impress others with your spirituality/devotion to God.
- Allow people time to grieve. Try to be understanding. Don't judge them. The grieving need time to think about the person who has died, to contemplate what is happening in their lives, to learn how to handle their grief, and how their loss will affect their lives.

M. Our journey through the emotional storm of grief can become the opportunity to comfort those who are grieving (2 Cor. 1:3-7). The Scriptures admonish us to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). God administers His grace and mercy through people who come alongside of us to bring encouragement when we are overwhelmed with sorrow.

- We must stand by each other in times of sorrow. “Do not relish the misfortune of others” (Prov. 17:5). When

people fail, when they are enduring a personal loss, pray for them. Give a word of encouragement. Send them a card.

- Your presence and love can be of immense help to those who feel isolated by their sorrow.

N. Our grief is to be carried along by the deep and strong current of abiding joy. Joy is that delight in God that refuses to despair but instead holds on to His hand, knowing that He is lovingly and wisely working out His purposes in my life. Joyful grieving is seeing bereavement and loss not as the end of the story but as a step toward the realization of all the promises of God (Hab. 3:17-19; 2 Cor. 6:10).

- In the midst of the loss of everything Habakkuk chose to rejoice in the Lord (see notes in Bible).
- The just shall live by his faithfulness when joined to a God who is adequate for all things. It is faith in God that carries us through the dark night of grief. We may be blinded by circumstances, confused, and hurt by the loss of that which is dear to us, but that need not determine our outlook. Triumphant faith must carry us. It is faith in God and the promises He has given.

- It was David who said, “My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Thy word” (Psa. 119:28). Your heart must be full of God’s truth. That is the only way to be prepared for grief. You will need a deep well so that you can draw up the cool refreshing waters of truth. If not you can lose your way in life because of grief. It can disorient you and take you places you should not go, if you will let it.

O. Grief is an experience for which there must be preparation.

- We must live on an intimate basis with God. Become well acquainted with God.
- Do not let people become bigger than God.
- Love people. Keep short accounts with people.
- Do not live obsessed with protecting yourself from hurt and pain. Do not deny yourself meaningful relationships.
- Live for eternity and not for time. Seek God and His wisdom. Learn how to process life and its struggles. Let the Scriptures teach you about the role of suffering in life.

- Rejoice in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that it means (Lk. 24:6, 7, 19-27, 45-47). Be ready to share your hope in Christ.
- P. Grief will be banished when God makes all things new and destroys the last enemy, death (Isa. 35:10; 51:11; Rev. 21:4).
- The eternal future of God's redeemed will include the passing away of the old order (Rev. 21:1).
 - The eternal future of God's redeemed will include life in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).
 - The eternal future of God's redeemed will include the presence of the Lord (Rev. 21:3). A new experience of the presence of Christ will be the delight of the redeemed. This is the whole story of the Word of God. Here is the summation of the drama of redemption.
 - The eternal future of God's redeemed will include the passing away of the effects of sin (21:4-5). A new environment awaits the redeemed. Death will not be there. There will not be any separation, misery, hurt, sickness, regrets, grief, or pain.

- The eternal future of God's redeemed will be filled with soul satisfaction, the enjoyment of a completed inheritance, and fullness of fellowship with God (Rev. 21:6-7).
- The eternal future of God's redeemed will not be available to those who die in their unbelief (Rev. 21:8).

Summary and application

1. Grief is a part of this fallen world and I must accept it, for in it I may hear God. Grief, like all pain and suffering, is God's loudspeaker calling me to Him. For purposes found only in His infinite wisdom, He has designed grief so that it might bring glory to Him. Yes, the pain of bereavement cuts like a knife. It lays me bare before God. But God does not look upon me like some amused tyrant enjoying the misery of one who is a threat to his throne. He is one who has experienced the sadness, loneliness, and gut wrenching sorrow of loss. He has given Himself for me. He endured an incomparable loss, the loss of the life of His Son. That loss was a gift, the gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. My grief, no matter what the loss, can have meaning. It does not need to be wasted. It belongs to me, because I belong to God. Through the tears of my grief, I can see the rain shadow, the light of hope that belongs to all who are in Christ.
3. Grief is bitterly painful. Like a cold winter wind it sweeps over the soul. It does not play favorites. It visits men, women, children, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, warriors, poets, everyone. It does run its course, like a storm. But like an earthquake it will have its aftershocks. These, to some degree, will always be there. Grief will come in immediate intensity. Or it may come like a steady cold drizzle (anticipatory grief). It is almost like coming to the very gates of hell.

4. For those who do not know the eternal life that Jesus Christ gives, grief is without any hope whatsoever. Unbelievers can create rituals, bask in the warmth of glowing eulogies, sing and dance, indulge themselves in wishful thinking, but without the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ there can be no real hope in death. Death is nothing but a deep, dark hole into which the unsaved fall to be judged by God forever. Eternity becomes hopeless, unending, excruciatingly painful grief.

In Shakespeare's King Lear there is a truly terrible moment when the old king, having learned in the hardest possible way that Cordelia was the only daughter who loved him, carries her corpse onto the stage and calls the company to grieve with him.

*Howl, howl, howl, howl! O! You are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and ears, I'd use them so
That heaven's vaults should crack. She's gone forever.*

5. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer has nothing to fear from death. Jesus Christ left heaven and came to pay the penalty of sin so that our grief can be hopeful. Grief reminds us that something is wrong. This is not the way things are supposed to be. But God did not stand by with His hands in His pockets. Because of Christ, after the winter of grief, there is the spring of the resurrection and the joy of life with God forever. Because of Christ God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain;" (Rev. 21:4).