



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

THE DARK MOMENTS IN OUR LIFE

KEY PASSAGE: Genesis 37:1-14 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: 1 Corinthians 10:13 | Romans 8:28-29

► SUMMARY

Every single person can expect adversity.

All of us, at one time or another, have been mistreated, rejected, or tempted. In the middle of life's challenges, even believers can feel depressed, anxious, and fearful. Our suffering may seem purposeless and make us wonder why the Lord isn't answering our prayers. We begin to doubt the marvelous promises of His Word.

The Bible never guarantees a life free from suffering. But the Lord does promise to limit it. The dark moments of our life last only as long as is necessary for God to accomplish His purpose. He uses trials, difficulty, and hardship to equip us to serve Him more effectively. As you and I continue to trust and obey Him, God uses adversity to develop the character of Christ within us.

► SERMON POINTS

A Scriptural Illustration

Joseph, the son of Jacob, certainly experienced a great deal of suffering. As his father's favorite, he was hated by his 10 older brothers (Gen. 37:3-4). Although they wanted to kill Joseph, they sold him into slavery instead. As a captive, Joseph was taken to Egypt where he excelled in running Potiphar's household. However, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. And when he refused her advances, she claimed he tried to rape her, and he was thrown into prison. While there, he interpreted a dream and predicted that Pharaoh's butler would be restored to his former position. Unfortunately, the butler forgot his promise to help free Joseph once he returned to royal

service. Only when Pharaoh had a mysterious dream did the butler remember the young Hebrew's amazing ability.

How did God use suffering in the life of Joseph? As a Hebrew boy, Joseph knew nothing about Egypt. Through suffering, the Lord prepared him to serve as prime minister of that nation. In captivity, he learned about the Egyptian language and culture. He discovered how to keep his focus on the one true God among people who believed in multiple gods. Joseph learned how to obey authority and persevere despite injustice. As he rose to leadership—once under Potiphar and again under the head jailer—he learned that God was in charge no matter how bleak his circumstances looked. Ultimately, his suffering equipped him with the skills he needed to save his family from famine.

God's Purpose for Dark Times

The Father's primary purpose for adversity is to conform us to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). He desires to mold you and me so that our character becomes like the nature of Jesus: we think the way He thinks; love the way He loves; forgive the way He forgives. Through hardship, the Lord teaches us to depend on His presence instead of relying on our own strength. God's love for us does not eliminate pain, suffering, or heartache, but it does guarantee He will use it for his glory and our good (Rom. 8:28).

Through our trials, the Father teaches us to keep our focus on Him. We learn to trust that He will create good from our difficulty. Be willing to say, "I don't understand, but I'm willing to obey you through it." Rebellion only lengthens the duration of that difficulty. During a dark

moment, it may look as if the adversity will never end. But God loves you and He's going to work out His will in your life somehow—if you will trust and obey Him.

The Duration of Dark Moments

Adversity will last for only the time needed for the Father to accomplish His perfect plan for our lives. First Corinthians 10:13 says, "God ... 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." The word temptation can also be translated as trial. In other words, God limits the heartache and pain we experience. He knows what each person can handle.

The Father was there in every lonely moment Joseph experienced. God saw the rejection he experienced at the hands of his brothers. He was there during the years Joseph spent alone, separated from his family, and working as a slave. The Lord knew the young Hebrew was unjustly incarcerated. Despite what others thought of him, the Lord knew Joseph was faithful, trustworthy, and obedient.

If you are a child of God, that's how He sees you, too. He sees your faith, tenacity, and diligence. That doesn't mean He's not aware of your weaknesses and frailties. But as His child, you are under His supernatural care. Think about the limits our heavenly Father set on Joseph's adversity. He allowed him to be sold into slavery but didn't let his brothers kill him. He permitted the Egyptian authorities to throw Joseph into prison but prevented them from taking his life. The Lord's sovereignty restricted the duration of his suffering; He will limit your hardships as well.

Surviving the Dark Moments

How did Joseph stay faithful despite his adversity? First, he remembered the prophetic dreams that had predicted his leadership role (Gen. 37:5-11). Even though he didn't

understand fully what they meant, the revelations gave him hope. Second, Joseph lived out the teaching his father had instilled in him about God. Pagan nations had numerous gods, but the Lord revealed to the Hebrews that Jehovah was the one true God. Compared to what we know today, Joseph didn't know much theology. But what he did know sustained him through difficulty.

To survive the dark moments of your own life, you must first trust the Father. When we rely on God, He gives us all we need to overcome. Second, you must read His Word. As you meditate on the Scriptures, you will be training your mind to think as God does. The more you think Christlike thoughts, the more you will act in a holy manner. That means you must dedicate time to reading and studying His Word. If you allow time to listen to Him, He will lead you through every challenging situation and circumstance.

► RESPONSE

- Are you experiencing a time of darkness in your life? Perhaps you wonder, *Father, why are you letting this happen to me?* Or maybe you haven't been faithful in your walk with the Lord, and you realize that God is using adversity to draw you back to Himself.
- Regardless of why you are facing adversity, don't miss what great things the Lord has in store for you. Devote yourself to seeking His face in prayer. Reprogram your mind by reading His Word and meditating on it daily. Don't give up when it seems that your pain will never end. Trust Him to guide you through the dark moments of your life, and God will do amazing things in and through you.

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