



Third Day Living
Beyond a Bad Diagnosis
Biblical Text: Romans 8:31-39

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(* - change slide on screens)

In this series, we are claiming this message: **“The worst thing is never the last thing!”* It is the ultimate message of Easter, of the Resurrection.

God knows we need it. It may not today for you. But here’s a guarantee: *Someone needs that message today.* And here’s another: *There will be a day when every one of us will need that message!* There will.

Each of us will face death, doubt, depression, divorce, an empty house, a hard transition, **a bad diagnosis** or a thousand other things that leave us asking, * *“What just happened?”* and *“Where in the world is God anyway?”*

This past week, I led a discussion about this topic with a group of other pastors, using an illustration from the movie, **“Moneyball.”* One of my colleagues, in frustration, said: *“Gardner, what is it with you and baseball?”*

She had a point. In other seminars, she’s heard me use illustrations from the films, *“42,” “A League of Their Own,”* and *“The Trouble with the Curve.”*

I love baseball. I admit it. I have loved it since I was a kid, listening to Kansas City A’s games with my *grandfather on his old Philco radio.

I love baseball. **Except when I don’t.** As good as last week was it’s been a pretty **lousy week in KC baseball!** First, a pitcher * broke Alex Rios’ hand. I don’t know what Rios said. **But it isn’t repeatable in my sermon.**

And Friday night Oakland’s third baseman swept Escobar’s leg!* What kind of baseball is that? More like *Arena Football!* **It’s not been a good week.**

But here’s my point, and it isn’t about baseball. What can we **do** about it? How can lay claim to faith that **“The worst thing is never the last thing!”*?

Let me put it in a more personal way. At the intersection of tragedy or crisis - when that day comes for you - and inevitably it will - will you allow that day drive you from your faith - or to a new depth of trust in God?

I've known several "worst days" in my life. Maybe you have, too. Or maybe your "worst day" is just around the corner. But don't leave here without knowing this today: * **"You can trust God in, through and beyond the worst day in your life. In fact, trusting God will be your only hope."**

If you can claim faith in God **then**, on your worst day ever, when the worst thing happens - then you will have faith, with God's help, that will never fail!

For me, those worst days have been incredibly hard: The loss of my father, and the recent loss of my sister among them. But nothing compared with the time our infant son had an uncontrollable fever that went into febrile seizures. We did everything we could and nothing, nothing worked.

As we raced him to the hospital I prayed desperately all the way, **"Not my son, dear God, not my son."** Once the doctor saw him, he said these words, * *"We think it might be meningitis. We have to do a spinal tap to be sure."* In my terror, I lost the ability to even pray. I just held on, and barely that.

I can hardly tell you about how it felt to hold him down while he screamed as they drew spinal fluid. I wish I could tell you that I leaned on my faith in God, but I don't know that. I just got through it. And so did he, thank God. **But I think it is to those moments that our text from Romans 8 points us.**

- * ***"If God is for us, who is against us?"***
- * ***"God did not withhold the gift of God's own Son."***
- * ***"Will God not with him also give us everything else?"***
- * ***"Who will separate us from the love of Christ?"***
 - * ***"Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"***
 - * ***"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."***¹

It reminds me of three important lessons we can hold on to:

* **We can remember who God is.**

Most of us can point to a day when everything went wrong - car accident, heart attack, death of loved one, a bad diagnosis, or a hundred other things. But, if it feels like life has declared open season on you, you can know this:

¹ Romans 8: 31-37. Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*, Copyright ©1989. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Stuff happens. Nothing in the Bible says bad things won't happen in the course of life. They will, I guarantee it. **But know something else.**

The “worst things” don’t come from God. They are not to teach you a lesson or refine your faith, although that might happen. And they don’t change the nature of God, or God's love for you.

Here’s what it says in Lamentations 3:33: **“It is not God’s will or purpose to bring affliction or grief to anyone.”*² **Remember who God is.**

***We can remember what God can do.**

Will God be at work after the worst day of your life? **Absolutely!** In fact producing good fruit from bad days is what God does! Consider this verse from Romans 8:28: **“In all things God works for good for those who love God and are called according to God’s own purpose.”*

You may never understand the "why" of a tough time, or the underlying reason behind a crisis, because the plain truth is that there often isn’t one! But you can trust me on this one. God can bring good out of the worst things in life. God is the only one who can! **In all things God is at work for good.**

***We can allow God to keep working in us.**

When the worst day of your life comes, you'll have to either abandon your faith as useless, or keep your faith as the only thing of value in your life. There's no middle ground. If you can make the courageous decision to keep putting one foot in front of the other, if you can make the important faith step of turning to God alone for your strength. Philippians 1:6 says this: ** “God, who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion.”*

Worst things? Paul knew about them. Blinded on the road to Damascus; a former enemy of Christians with a bad reputation; afflicted with an ailment he called a *“thorn in the flesh;”* imprisoned for his faith; blind by the end of his life; and leader of a bunch of stubborn Churches, who challenged his leadership. But out of his struggle came the most important words I know.

**“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor 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.” (Romans 8:38-39)*

² Lamentations 3:33, paraphrased by the author.