

All Grief

(Suffering)

is good grief

for those

in Christ

'As sorrowful yet always rejoicing' 2 Cor 6:10

In the Presence of God

All grief is good grief in Christ

The grief God gives His children is good for them.

grief (n.)

early 13c., "hardship, suffering, pain, bodily affliction,"

from Old French grief "wrong, grievance, injustice, misfortune, calamity" (13c.), from grever "afflict, burden, oppress,"

from Latin gravare "make heavy; cause grief,"

from gravis "weighty" (from PIE root *gwere- (1) "heavy").

Meaning "mental pain, sorrow" is from c. 1300. Good grief as an exclamation of surprise, dismay, etc., is from 1912.

'Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test you [that is, to test the quality of your faith], as though something strange or unusual were happening to you.'

1 Pet 4:12 Amplified edition.

Do not be surprised with what grieves us, for it is necessary for our growth in holiness. Grief is the experience of being torn from our reliance on the earthly realms, to fix our hope on the future grace of our heavenly reward.

"Faith in future grace is always the belief in God's promises and the embrace of God's person. It is a sense of confident security in God's promised gifts, and a sense of contented satisfaction in God himself." John Piper. Future Grace.

"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."(Job 1:21) Like Job, we must learn to trust God in all our afflictions.

It would seem that we have lost our bearings for the kingdom of God, so that life in the world has become our default destination and priority. We have set our compass for the temporary so that we lose sight of heaven. Our spiritual compass seems to be squarely pointing to the north pole instead of to the morning star.

"The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE SHATTERED, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star."

Rev 2:26-28

There is only One who can provide the comfort and strength we so desperately need as we walk in the valley of the shadow of death. He is our God of all comfort. He always provides for His obedient children in every affliction because they live under the duress of a world without God's accepted reign.

However, listening to the prayers in church would cause us to reflect on our true calling. Why do we treat the trials that God ordained for us in the world as something to be avoided? Especially when it is through trials that our holiness in Christ is progressed and our glory ensured? If it wasn't for God's providential testing of our faith, we would rather remain unrefined and seek our comfort in the world. The world is a refining crucible for our goldenness.

R.C. Sproul, in his book "Surprised by Suffering" laments.

"I am astonished that, in the light of the clear biblical record, anyone would have the audacity to suggest that it is wrong for the afflicted in body or soul to couch their prayers for deliverance in terms of "If it be thy will...." We are told that when affliction comes, God always wills healing, that He has nothing to do with suffering, and that all we must do is claim the answer we seek by faith. We are exhorted to claim God's yes before He speaks it.

Away with such distortions of biblical faith! They are conceived in the mind of the Tempter, who would seduce us into exchanging faith, for No amount of pious verbiage can transform such falsehood into sound doctrine. We must accept the fact that God sometimes says no. Sometimes He calls us to suffer and die even if we want to claim the contrary."

We may not have swallowed the whole untruth of "naming and claiming" but we seem to have a worldly perspective nevertheless.

A word to the wise. "Who is like the wise person and who knows the meaning of a matter? A person's wisdom illuminates his face and makes his stern face brighten up." Ecc 8:1

In his book "Surprised by Suffering" R.C. Sproul makes this observation.

"A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the sternness of his face is changed. (v1) After hearing Solomon tell us it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth, we might get the idea that God wants His people to be so contemplative, so considering in the difficult things of life, that they walk around stone-faced, with a dour disposition. That is not at all

what the author of Ecclesiastes intends. Instead, he is affirming here that when we understand the sovereignty of God, it changes the countenance of our face. It changes our demeanour. Those who understand God's sovereignty have joy even in the midst of suffering, a joy reflected on their very faces, for they see that their suffering is not without purpose."

God has a purpose in allowing our suffering. *'The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.'* Rom 8:16-17

'In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

1 Pet 1:6-7

'Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.' James 1:2-4

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matt 5:10-12

'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 8:28

Resisting the need for trials is to resist the will of God

If we are averse to trials and tribulations, how will we give thanks in all things, and be as sorrowful but rejoicing? Since the word of God tells us to: *'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.'* 1 Thess 5:16-18

God is not beating about the bush: *'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.'*
Phil 4:6-7

God know our struggles in the world. *'As unknown and yet well known, as dying and yet behold, we are alive; as punished and yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.'*
2 Cor 6:9-10

'Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father.'
Eph 5:21

John Calvin encourages us in "The little book on the Christian life" to think about what God is doing.

"For those whom the Lord has chosen and condescended to welcome into fellowship with Him should prepare themselves for a life that is hard, laborious, troubled, and full of many and various kinds of evil. For it's the will of their heavenly Father to test them in this way so that He might prove them by trials. Having begun this way with Christ, His only-begotten Son, He continues similarly with all His children.

And again: Why, then, would we exempt ourselves from the same situation to which Christ our head was subjected, particularly since He was subjected to suffering for our sake to provide for us a pattern of patience in Himself?

And again: From this also we receive remarkable consolation, that in the midst of dark and difficult circumstances, which we consider hostile and evil, we share in Christ's sufferings. For just as He entered into heavenly glory from a labyrinth involving every kind of evil, so we, in the same way, are led through various trials. And thus Paul himself says in another place that as long as we are learning to share in His suffering, we will know the power of His resurrection."
Phil. 3:10

We pray a lot about God relieving us from the suffering that He ordains

Has the Christian faith turned to seeking comfort and happiness in the world, forgetting we are strangers on earth who must carry a cross of suffering? (Like 9:23-24; Matt 16:24-25) Scripture tells us that suffering has been appointed

by God for us as we live as aliens in a hostile world, even while we wait patiently in anticipation of our future life in the presence of God?

Paul tells us: *'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.'* Eph 1:18-19

In Christ we are made alive as those who are dead to the world. *'But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.'* Gal 6:14

Have we forgotten about the presence of God? Have we forgotten that God's remedy for our suffering is the comfort of Christ who lives in us to the glory of God? *'To whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'* Col 1:27

God's solution for our discomfort is His presence in us

'For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.' Col 3:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ." 2 Cor 1:3-5

'Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.' Gal 2:20

"On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I in you. The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him." John 14:20-21

'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?' 1 Cor 6:19

Have we forgotten God owns us so we do as He wills?

'for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.' Phil 2:13

'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.' 1 Cor 6:19-20

'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.' Rom 14:7-8

'Those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.' 2 Cor 5:15

Anyone who says that the Christian life is about having everything we want is not speaking the truth. We are in Christ for His kingdom, a kingdom which is not of this world so we would seek what we need from that which is unholy. So, we suffer in the world for God. *"It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God."* Acts 14:22

We only think we decide how things will go. *'Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both adversity and good proceed? Of what can any living mortal, or any man, Complain in view of his sins? Let's examine and search out our ways, And let's return to the Lord.'* Lam 3:37-40

Spiritual living requires godly training through trials

'It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is impaired may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.'

Heb 12:7-8, 11-13

Suffering is godly training. *'For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for this reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.'* Heb 2:10-11

Even though we suffer under the hand of God, we shall declare: *"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I wait for Him."* Lam 3:24

John Piper explains to us in his book "Providence" "The pattern that runs all through Scripture is that God's people must pass through suffering on the way to glory. This pattern came to a peak of horror and glory in Jesus Christ. "They spit in His face and struck Him. And some slapped Him" (Matt. 26:67). His experience of suffering and subsequent glory became the perfect pattern and the perfect foundation of our hope in suffering."

Calvin explains how Jesus is our example for suffering self denial

"MOREOVER, OUR LORD in no way had to take upon Himself the bearing of a cross except to prove and testify to His own obedience to His Father. However, there are many reasons why we ourselves must spend our lives subject to a constant cross. First of all, there's the fact that unless our own weaknesses are regularly displayed to us, we easily overestimate our own virtue, being by nature inclined to attribute all good things to our own doing."

Again:

"There's no better method for God to curb such arrogance than by demonstrating to us through experience our weakness and frailty. He afflicts us with disgrace, poverty, childlessness, illness, and other troubles. And we, for our part, quickly crumble before such blows, being far from able to withstand them. Thus humbled, we learn to call on His strength, which alone can make us stand under the weight of such affliction. Indeed, the holiest among us know they stand by God's grace and not by their own virtues. Yet they would nevertheless become too confident in their own courage and constancy if they weren't led to a more intimate knowledge of themselves by the testing of the cross."

John Calvin. The little book on the Christian life.

Since this is so: *'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.'*

Phil 2:5-8

We must look to Christ for our reality

'Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory....and have put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it.... Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.'

Col 3:1-4, 10, 17

We have work to do under the hand of God who works in us

'Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written: "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1 Pet 1:13-16

As Christ offered Himself, so we obediently offer ourselves to God

'Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.' Rom 12:1-2

John Calvin puts it this way in "The little book on the Christian life"

"MOREOVER, OUR LORD in no way had to take upon Himself the bearing of a cross except to prove and testify to His own obedience to His Father. However,

there are many reasons why we ourselves must spend our lives subject to a constant cross. First of all, there's the fact that unless our own weaknesses are regularly displayed to us, we easily overestimate our own virtue, being by nature inclined to attribute all good things to our own doing."

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Faith is trusting God as we grow in holiness in an uncertain world

From this we can know about God's Providence and the plan He is working out according to His predetermined will. It is then we will understand the importance of obeying His commands in every situation.

And for His children He requires we respond in the humility of absolute submission, knowing He knows best. So, we acknowledge Him as God and Lord. For through many trials and tribulations we enter the kingdom of God.

As we live in worldly conflict and chaos, Christ is our rock, we no longer rely on what we think we understand, for our understanding will never be perfect this side of heaven. We find our understanding in the Word of God, which tells us that in the working of His providence, God causes good and calamity. (Isa 45:7 ESV) And we just calm down and bow down.

Whatever happens in the world is always subject to God's control. "*I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.*"
Isa 45:7

When we live for God, what Jesus demands for His disciples becomes the normal thing for us because we have died to pleasing ourselves, to no

longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf.

2 Cor 5:15

Because God is Sovereign, everything we experience in life is no accident, or can be assigned to chance, and should only be viewed through the prism of God's permissive will working out His preordained plan for our good. His will is to make us holy as He is Holy.

Our Father tests us to see if we will trust Him or try to sort it out by ourselves. Therefore, we obey Jesus by taking up our cross of self-sacrifice. God has arranged it so that our obedience can be motivated by His love as the only way to godliness.

2 Cor 5:14

Being saved by grace is to live in grace

'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'

Rom 5:1-5

Grace is where God is. What we lack in the natural world, Jesus makes up for with the gift of Himself to abide in us. *God is our refuge and strength.*

Psalms 46

If we are in Christ we live in the grace of our God. There is nowhere we can be on earth that can separate us from the grace of God, for God is everywhere we are.

Rom 8:35-39

If we want to enjoy the fullness of His grace, we must live in His presence. We suffer when we are absent minded in regards to walking in His presence. And absent mindedness robs us of the complete pure overflowing love that we can know when we consciously abide in His presence, because He lives in us.

We can know the reality of His presence. *'That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through*

His Spirit in the inner self, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.' Eph 3:16-19

Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him." John 14:23

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" Matt 28:20

We can be anxious for nothing because we are united with God

And Jesus asks the Father on our behalf. *"I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."* John 17:20-21

Everything that our God wants us to understand stands or falls on trusting Him and believing Him, and in our commitment to abiding moment by moment in the presence of our Christ. Peace is in the presence of Christ.

'These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.' John 16:33

Because we are in Christ, all that Christ has, we share as co-heirs. *'And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.'* Rom 8:17

Therefore, while we abide in His presence now, we look forward to the day of His coming for us, but we are patient and long-suffering because our wait gives opportunity for family and friends to also be taken into the family of God. 2 Pet 3:12

In Christ we have the God of all knowledge and wisdom to teach us. *'Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'* Col 2:2-3

With Christ we suffer now, so we will be raised with Him in His glory.
Rom 8:17

For now, we groan along with the creation, waiting patiently for His coming when we will be made like Him through the redemption of our mortal bodies into the likeness of His resurrection body.

Rom 8:23; Rom 6:5

We have tears now, but He will wipe away every tear. Rev 21:4

We suffer now as we wait for the new heaven and earth. *'Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.'* 2 Pet 3:12

We might suffer now, but we will one day we will be seated with Him at the wedding supper of the Lamb of God. *'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'* And he said to me, *"These are the true words of God."* Rev 19:8

We have every assurance from God that this is not the end

We can only seek to be satisfied with the flesh and the world when we live according to our own understanding, and ignore what God has revealed to us through His Son.

God has ordained that every disturbing situation, every disagreeable person, every trial, and every longing for what we don't know, is to be a call for us to quickly return to abide in the bosom of God.

We need to take charge of our minds so that we don't operate by the default of the natural man and turn our minds to the world. The more we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, the less satisfied we will be with the things of the world.

But for now, we wait and groan as our bodies decay. Rom 8:22-23

When we suffer, we may want to think that our comfort and healing is the greatest good, but God is sovereign, and His wisdom surpasses our understanding. (Isaiah 55:8) For our Father, our holiness in Christ is our greatest good. When we suffer, we need to see Jesus who prayed to the Father for His cup of suffering to be removed, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."* Matt 26:39

We must believe His promise. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*
2 Cor 12:7-9

We need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We need to embrace Psalm 23 *'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.'*

If we believe, we can be comforted in all our afflictions. *'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.'* 2 Cor 1:3-5

Believing means we: "Do all things without complaining or arguments; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding firmly the word of life."
Phil 2:14-16

Grumbling and complaining reveals a belief that we are somehow being neglected. It comes from an attitude of presuming on God, which is sin, (Psalm 19:13) and utterly disrespectful, as transgressing the limits of what is permitted or appropriate in our relationship with God, thus increasing our ingratitude and faithlessness.

Patience is a virtue

"It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep quiet, Since He has laid it on him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; Perhaps there is hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who is going to strike him; Let him be filled with shame. For the Lord will not reject forever, for if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion In proportion to His abundant mercy."

Lam 3:26-32

If God is not more important to us than the mundane things of the world, we have not understood that we are made alive to live in holiness with Him. Our treasurer is where our heart is. What we accept as important is where we invest our thinking. If our minds are habitually given to the

world, then we need a serious reorientation to take place if we are to make real progress with our sanctification. When God is not in control of our hearts and minds, we are not compelled by His love to do all things for Him; because we want to live for ourselves and ignore His presence. So, we will be anxious and we will get angry, for we not trusting in God, and behaving like insecure and undisciplined children.

With this in mind we can understand the following: *'So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.'*

Phil 2:12-13

Is our faith true?

We cannot be complete and grow in holiness if we don't actually abide in the presence of our heavenly Father. The Lord makes it clear, to know our Father, and His Son, is more than doctrine. It is personal. It is intimate. It is together, it is for us; and it is forever.

"Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:25-26

John Calvin gives us his insight in "The little book on the Christian life"

"For those whom the Lord has chosen and condescended to welcome into fellowship with Him should prepare themselves for a life that is hard, laborious, troubled, and full of many and various kinds of evil. For it's the will of their heavenly Father to test them in this way so that He might prove them by trials. Having begun this way with Christ, His only-begotten Son, He continues similarly with all His children."

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Christ's sufferings. For just as He entered into heavenly glory from a labyrinth involving every kind of evil, so we, in the same way, are led through various trials. And thus Paul himself says in another place that as long as we are learning to share in His suffering, we will know the power of His resurrection." Phil. 3:10

How should we response to suffering?

If we are to be comforted by God in every affliction, we need to abide in Him, we cannot experience the peace of His presence if we are doing our own thing as a result of looking to the world and the wisdom of men who cannot see God.

It is clear that God always intended that the disciples of Jesus will suffer. "In this world," Jesus says, "you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" John 16:33

And as Jesus learned "obedience by the things that he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8), we can learn the value of suffering. 'For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps.' I Peter 2:21

'If we endure, we will also reign with Him, If we deny Him, He will also deny us.' 2 Tim 2:12

God intends to bless us through even painful circumstances, so we can give thanks because we have faith in Him. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' Rom 8:28

The blessings that God promises to us will last far beyond the suffering of the moment. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" 2 Cor 4:17–18

Fear is a natural response to seeing a situation from man's point of view. But we who are in Christ must bring the reality of God's presence into our

evaluation of the situation. God promised, *"I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER ABANDON YOU."* Heb 13:5

God does promise to be with us. *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you."* (Isaiah 43:2). Looking to God in faith is always the right response to any situation.

The Apostle Paul found joy in fellowship with God, even when life's pathway led him into *"... the fellowship of his sufferings ..."* (Phil 3:10) Paul also wrote, *"And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."* Rom 5:3-5

We cannot be comforted by God if we are not trusting He is doing all things for our good. Since it is God who is at work in us, we must give up the idea of complaining and grumbling. Phil 2:14

What do we want, comfort or happiness in holiness?

We may look for the healing of our bodies as the greater good for us to receive from the Father's hand, but the greatest good that comes from trials and tribulations is the eternal weight of glory to come when we receive the crown of righteousness for the Lord's hand.

And our trials are not just about us, our need gives those close around us, and those in our church, increased opportunity to exercise compassion and the spiritual gifts they have received for the good of others.

The natural consequences of living in a world condemned by sin, is that we will groan, sometimes loudly. And the whole creation groans along with us.

Happiness is not good health; happiness is fellowship with God. Some would prefer happiness in the world instead of God. For now, our happiness will always be incomplete until the Lord comes to take us home.

All the suffering of the world is no accident. The World reaps its own harvest for dishonouring God, and we cannot escape the curse on the world.

However, instead of turning all things into toast as is deserved, God provides some relief through His providence working through the souls of men and women in the science of medicine.

Although miracles are few and far between, God is not without mercy. In His providence we receive all the manifest benefits of medical science. All good things come from the Lord. It would appear that what we have from the provision of science is adequate enough for the purpose of God ministering to suffering in the world of human corruption.

Generalised healing can only come after worldwide holiness. This will only happen when the Lord takes us to be with Him, He will wipe away every tear.

Job shows us the way

'Then Job said to the Lord, "I know that You can do all things, and that no thought or purpose of Yours can be restrained or thwarted. [You said to me] Who is this that darkens and obscures counsel [by words] without knowledge? Therefore [I now see] I have [rashly] uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." Job 42:1-3 Amplified Bible

There is no hiding from the fact that pain is real. And Jesus was a man of sorrows, setting an example for us. *'He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.'* Isaiah 53:3

While we suffer in the world we affirm with the Lord. *"Your will be done."*

What is the correct way to respond to grief and suffering?

We respond to grief and suffering by worshipping the Lord in a spirit of holiness, having repented from all sin and ignorance.

We bow down before Him in hushed humility.

We put on a cloak of thankfulness having turned away from complaining.

And we pray without ceasing for God to have His way, especially for Christ to be manifest in us so we can be filled up to the fullness of God.

All while giving thanks to the Father in all things. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

'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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.'

Romans 8:28-29

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matt 6:30) In other words, Jesus says that the root of anxiety is inadequate faith in our Father's future grace. As unbelief gets the upper hand in our hearts, one of the effects is anxiety. The root cause of anxiety is a failure to trust all that God has promised to be for us in Jesus. John Piper. Future Grace.

'But we have this treasure in earthen containers, so that the extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.'

2 Cor 4:7-10

'Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.'

Heb 12:28-29

Thank God who mercifully turns the causes for all our grumbling around so we can rejoice as they are used to perfect us in the image of Christ.

Rom 8:28-29

Pray that the God will remove the heart of grumbling and give us a heart like Christ's heart, wholly devoted to the Father, so that we can be complete and more useful in the kingdom of God.

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Luke 22:42

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

*‘Pray without ceasing,
in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God for you
in Christ Jesus.’*

1 Thess 5:17-18

‘As sorrowful yet always rejoicing’ 2 Cor 6:10

In the Presence of God

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