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God-life: Job's Suffering

By Aleck Cartwright

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God-life: Job and You

I am reading the book of Job again in light of all that is happening over the world with the injustice of life and I am realising again that "life isn't fair but God is good".

(Hebrews 11) Abel believed God and he died, Enoch believed God and he did not die, Noah believed God and pretty much everybody else died. The only thing that they had in common was that they all believed God and it pleased Him. All that matters is if we believe, because then we can supernaturally bear all of the often overwhelming circumstances and situations of life by our simple faith in God. His "yolk is easy and His burden is light"

The problem of suffering leads us to one of four conclusions, 1. there is no God and life is a pathetic joke, 2. God is cruel and arbitrary and cares nothing for mankind, 3. God is powerless, or 4. God is alive and at work in our lives but we do not always completely understand what he is doing. Number 4 takes incredible faith.

As Job put it, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." The book Of Job actually hit me very hard as I read what it says. Job suffered terribly. His suffering would be on par with those in Africa or Asia or with any third world nation like Mozambique or Madagascar, where there is terrible demoralizing poverty.

Job had everything to lose at the beginning of the book and actually did lose everything in a very short period of time. He had friends who tried to give him counsel by reasoning with him about why all of this was happening. In fact His friends guidance was on par with any wisdom that man could give today. Job is one of the earliest books ever written, and yet not much has changed since then. There is nothing new under the sun.

Suffering has been a part of life ever since the fall and yet God turns it around for our good. It is incredible that Satan had to ask God's permission to terrorise Job, he doesn't seem to have free reign,

and also seems to be leashed, so that he can't take Job's life ultimately.

I also found it interesting that Job never once blamed Satan for his suffering, when that is what we do first and foremost. Is it that Job did not have a concept of Satan? Every time Job contemplates his suffering, he asks, "Why God?". Job saw the centrality of God in the universe and his own life. If we could focus on God and believe that He really does work all things out for our good, it may just be easier to understand why bad things happen to good people.

Maybe it's because bad things happen to all people, and if anything, that is exactly what God has promised us as believers. He will not give us more than we can bear, but I think at times it sure will come close! The importance of the matter is that we believe and trust God in spite of it all.

Jesus was all man and all God, He was not part-man or part-god, He had to learn who He was as a

Son of God, being made perfect through His suffering! How can Jesus who was perfect be made more perfect through His suffering? The fact is that we move from faith to faith in our belief of God, our trust deepens as we recognise our need for God and revelation from Him in all that we go through.

Jesus had to trust God in His life as well as His death, He had to trust that He was the Son of God in spite of His creation rejecting Him and He had to trust God through the suffering of the cross, to know that His death would be worth it. Jesus had no guarantee that His life would be happy, but He knew that His life would be worth it.

Jesus saw through the cross to the life that it would give to mankind. Jesus' death is a place of life and death, in fact it is where they meet. In our suffering too, we have a joining of our death, frailty and weakness with God's righteousness, salvation and eternity in us.

Job in the same way had to go through what He did before He finally saw that the God He had only heard rumour of, he could now see and know intimately. It is in our suffering that we are most dependant on our life in Christ, for our life is hid with Christ in God.

Suffering is not from God, but it does reveal to us where our dependency is and is a good test of character. It is also where our faith is tested. Allow God's life to meet you at your point of greatest suffering, it might be a relationship, a sickness, a death or a situation, but in everything, greater is He that is in you than anything that can come against you and ultimately, just as in Jesus, you will be more than a conqueror.

Aleck is a missionary and teacher and runs www.god-life.com as a source of encouragement and hope for people in today's climate.

Finding God in the Clouds

By Chad J. Bring

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"In the Bible, clouds are always associated with God. Clouds are the sorrows, suffering, or providential circumstances, within or without our personal lives, which actually seem to contradict the sovereignty of God. Yet it is through these very clouds that the Spirit of God is teaching us how to walk by faith. They are a sign that God is there." (Steven Curtis Chapman)

It was a cool August night during the Summer before my Junior year in high school. I was just getting off work on what seemed to be the worst day of my life. I was having a mental break-down, nothing was going right, and every negative thing in my life seemed to hit me at once.

The clock in my truck read 2:13am as I pulled into my high school parking lot that I do so often to take time to think. I laid in the back of the truck and look up at the beautiful stars and clouds. What seemed like forever, I was just talking and praying. I was praying that my life would get better and I kept asking God why He was doing this with my life. I am a Christian, I should have a great life, but it seemed to me, that He wasn't listening. I screamed, "God where are you?"

My eyes began to focus on different cloud formations. First I saw what looked like music notes and then I saw what looked like two people hugging. Then the last formation that I saw I will never forget, my eyes fixed on a formation of Jesus praying. Just then, my ears focused on the song that had been playing on the tape player. The song called "Sometimes He Comes In The Clouds" by Steven Curtis Chapman. The lyrics that I heard at that moment were;

"Sometimes He comes in the clouds, sometimes His face cannot be found, sometimes the sky is dark and gray, but some things can only be known, and sometimes our faith can only grow, where we can't see, so, sometimes He comes in the clouds.

Sometimes He comes in the rain, and we question the pain. And wonder why God can seem so far away, but time will show us, He was right there with us..."

That was the greatest moment in my life, and I will never forget it. I have such a love for life and I find such a joy in helping others enjoy life. Those clouds that night, were the spirit of God teaching me how to walk by faith, they reminded me that God is there. It is the greatest feeling in the world to know that God is with you always, even though it may seem like He is far away. Since then, I have never seen a cloud, without thinking about Him or that cool August night.

Chad J. Bring is a rising author who will soon be publishing his first novel, "Left Standing" in addition to co-writing a screenplay for an independent film through their RoomMate Productions film production company.



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