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The Oppression of Suffering—P4

“For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; So that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14).

We weren't created to suffer. Yet there are many ways to suffer in this world. We can suffer loss of something we had, deprivation of something we feel we need, emotional or physical injuries, and on and on it goes. Depending on the depth of our pain, our natural resilience, or the grace God affords, some may be able to still function and have a “normal” life, while others may be so completely overwhelmed that they must devote all their energy to relief.

Often, suffering nurtures in us a sense of betrayal. We instinctively know suffering isn't right—it isn't how life should be. Why did God, our loving and just Father, create us in a world that could harm us? Was that his plan? If we know the Gospel, we know it was our rebellion against Him that brought suffering into the world—He has never intended suffering. And He is going to end all suffering one day in eternity. Yet, this can be small comfort when we are suffering. And emotionally we can lash out. *“Know then that God has wronged me and has closed His net around me. Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and He has put darkness on my paths. He has stripped my honor from me and removed the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone”* (Job 19:6-12).

Job admitted that his words of anguish were emotional: *“Do you intend to reprove my words, when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?”* (Job 6:26) The wind comes and goes and has no substance, just like our emotions. We know in our heart of hearts that all things *“work together for good to those who love God”* (Rom. 8:28b). Even in his suffering, Job affirmed this: *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His*

stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:25-27) But like a child, we can still struggle emotionally with the pain and deprivation God allows in our lives.

Furthermore, we know God is capable of healing us and it would not take any effort for Him to do so, so why does He allow us to suffer? As David asked, *“I will say to God my rock, ‘Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’”* (Ps. 42:9) The truth is that *“the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* (Rom. 8:19-21). All this suffering, pain, and death is simply the outcome of our rebellion against God—one which God will correct under Jesus's rule.

In the meantime, no one likes to be in pain. And our suffering is the perfect opportunity for the devil to accuse God to us when we are fixed on Him in expectation of relief or restoration. Because, when it doesn't come, we can despair—we are tempted to accuse God of injustice, intending us harm, or of not caring. Satan is behind these attacks. But God is not capable of injustice, cannot commit evil, and is not so high that He does not care or cannot empathize—He became one of us, remember?

God understands our suffering, more than we could know, through Jesus Christ. *“He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried”* (Is. 53:3-4), *“for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:15-16). May we trust God with our suffering. Amen.

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