



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

“How Long, O Lord?”

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It's likely all of us have experienced it or know someone who has. We are afflicted with a chronic condition that lingers; a debilitating illness with little indication normal health will return; or a repeated grief cycle that includes feelings such as numbness, anger, and tears that overwhelm us without warning.

Or maybe we are vexed by yet another news story of a drive-by shooting of an innocent child, the camera zoomed in on her inconsolable family convulsing in grief. Or another mass shooting in a school, theater, shopping center—or church. Or hearing a family in an upscale suburb is moving because they are the wrong race or nationality. Or maybe your hurt comes from a report of a town leveled by a tornado.

As Jesus's disciples, we should not think—or suggest—things like these are somehow not as bad as they appear. On the contrary, we should face and tell the truth. Although defeated when Jesus was raised, Death remains certain, a relentless enemy whose destruction is abetted by this world's ills that continually feed its insatiable appetite (1 Cor 15.26; cf. Heb 9.27). Scripture tells us we live in a flawed creation that longs for the deliverance that is promised at the time of the “revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8.19). But Satan remains determined to create all the chaos and inflict all the pain he can (1 Pet 5.8; 2 Cor 11.14).

But that is not the whole story. God reigns. He loves us. He grieved so much over the world's failings that, in the person of his Son, he came and participated in them to rescue us from their grip (Matt 23.37-39; 2 Cor 5.21). He also lets us see enough of what will be that, even in our darkest times, we know the greatest glory is yet to come (Rom 8.18, 21-25).

So, we keep fighting. But we are right to wonder when it will ever end. Just revisit the Bible records of David, who wondered how long his good name would be slandered (Psa 4.2); of Habakkuk, who wondered how long the covenant people, his people,

would have to tolerate being victims of a cruel and violent conqueror (Hab 1.2); of Paul, who said he longed for the day when he would enjoy his final victory over death (Phil 1.23-24); of the martyrs, who, having been killed by the first evil empire that tried to stamp out Christian faith, wondered how long it would be before God would finally settle the score and give his enemies what they deserved (Rev 6.10).

“How *long*, O Lord?” We don’t know. But we do know that, whenever the time comes when we can stop asking that question, we will be at home with him (2 Cor 5.8), fully enjoying the promised life that far surpasses what we can now imagine (Rom 8.18; 2 Cor 4.17; Eph 3.20).

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