



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

Jesus, Present in Our Suffering

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From within the misery of his suffering, Job lamented, “Anyone born of woman is short of days and full of trouble. He blossoms like a flower, then withers; he flees like a shadow and does not last” (Job 14.1–2 CSB). Few of us have come close to the extent and depth of suffering Job experienced, but most of us have gone through times where we were prompted to feelings similar to his.

But he spoke only part of the truth. As he later learned, God is bigger than this world, including its trouble. Awareness of that reality is behind Paul’s assurance that suffering produces endurance which produces character which in turn produces hope (Rom 5.3–4). Thus, for those who are keen on seeking God’s reign first, troubles can be seen and eventually even appreciated as part of the process of discipline that enables us to share God’s holiness (Heb 12.10). Did Job have some sense of these positive aspects of trouble? It’s certainly possible; that’s part of what makes him a model for dealing with suffering.

But in one area, our knowledge affords us an advantage Job didn’t have. While Job shows the importance of coming to see God as we’ve never before seen him (Job 42.5), he saw only a distant Deity who answered him from the whirlwind (Job 38.1). Between Job’s day and ours, God came here, lived among us, and shared our troubles. Jesus, God with us, suffered. He knows what it’s like to be tempted to sin. Knows the challenge of weariness and despair. Knows the pain of both rejection and grief. And yes, he knows about facing death, in his case an experience made more excruciating because he of all people in no way deserved to die.

Peter Kreeft said it well:

He came. That is the salient fact, the towering truth, that alone keeps us from putting a bullet through our heads. He came.... Out of our tears, our waiting, our darkness, our agonized aloneness, out of our weeping and wondering, out of our cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” he came, all the way, right into that cry.

In coming into our world he came into our suffering.... He is there. That is the only thing that matters. Who cares about cars and success and miracles and long life when you have God sitting beside you? (*Making Sense Out of Suffering* [Servant Books, 1986], 133)

In a world inundated with sickness, despair, and death, how wonderful is it to know that?

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