

CLOUDS AND COMFORT

Suffering is something with which we are all familiar and it comes to us in many ways. It can come clothed in financial, emotional, and physical attire. Maybe there is job loss, the loss of a loved one, or the enduring hardship of ill health.

If you are familiar with the recent story of little Charlie Gard, you have undoubtedly been touched by the magnitude of its heart-wrenching depth. Stories like that bring the age-old question to our minds, “Why is there such suffering in the world?” Many have asked that question and even the more intriguing question of, “If God is good, how could He allow such suffering to exist?” Sometimes, that question is posed as more of an indictment upon the goodness of God than a legitimate question.

To be sure, we must say that suffering is the result of The Fall. When Adam sinned in the Garden, suffering became part of the world in which we live. We also must say, though, that our sovereign God allowed it to happen. Maybe that’s why it’s hard to get our mind around it. If God is sovereign; if He is in control, then why did He allow suffering to infect the goodness of His creation?

The truth is, even when we get to heaven, all of our questions may not be fully answered for as Deuteronomy 29:29 asserts, “The secret things belong to the Lord...” We can, however, find at least one reason for suffering in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. “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.”

When we suffer, God is aware and He responds with comfort. Our text says that He is the God of ALL comfort. If there is comfort, then God is its Author. We’re also encouraged knowing that God comforts in EVERY trial. He doesn’t reserve comfort only for the major things, but in “ALL our affliction.” When you hurt, God is there to comfort. We also see that the purpose of His comfort is so we can comfort others down the road. How often, when you have been hurting, has someone who has trod the same road of suffering come along to comfort you? God’s comfort isn’t something we keep, but something we give to others in their time of need.

While it seems we would be better off without suffering, if we didn’t suffer we wouldn’t need, or know, God’s comfort and His comfort is a wonderful and beautiful thing. Life without suffering would be life without comfort.

The most beautiful sunrises are those which are enhanced by the presence of clouds and just as clouds in the sky make the sunrise more beautiful, so the clouds of suffering bring the beauty of God’s comfort to life.