

Weekly Newsletter: 25th July 2022

Reflection: When God Took Away His Goodness in My Grief

By Tim Challies (for the full article go to <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-god-took-away>)

There is a deep mystery to suffering. While the Bible makes it plain that we must expect to encounter times of sorrow and loss, of trial and grief, we often don't know why these times come. Though we know he is weaving together a marvellous tapestry that will wondrously display his glory, we also know it is one whose beauty we will fully appreciate only when faith becomes sight.

It was in the waning weeks of 2020 that my family faced our darkest hour, for it was then that the heart of my 20-year-old son Nick suddenly and unexpectedly stopped, and he went to be with the Lord. One moment he was a seminarian leading some fellow students in a game, and the next he was in heaven. His departure shocked us, devastated us, and left us wondering why. Why would God choose *this* for us, and why would God choose *us* for this?

In the aftermath of that dreadful evening, I turned to some of my dearest friends, friends who lived and died many years ago, but whom I've come to know through the books and sermons they left behind. If a multitude of advisers is necessary for planning well, how much more for grieving well ([Proverbs 15:22](#))? In the most difficult days and darkest hours, they counselled and consoled me.

Suffering as Witness

Theodore Cuyler was a close and steady companion who encouraged me to accept that God always places bright blessings behind the dark clouds of his providence. F.B. Meyer assured me that peace would come through submission to God's will, and that I should trust him in the taking as much as I had in the giving. But it was in the words of the old preacher J.R. Miller that I found one piece of wisdom that especially helped quiet my heart and direct my path.

Ofttimes the primary reason why godly men are called to suffer is for the sake of witness they may give to the sincerity of their love for Christ and the reality of divine grace in them. The world sneers at religious profession. It refuses to believe that it is genuine. It defiantly asserts that what is called Christian principle is only selfishness, and that it would not stand severe testing. Then, godly men are called to endure loss, suffering or sorrow, not because there is any particular evil in themselves which needs to be eradicated, but because the Master needs their witness to answer the sneers of the world. ("[The Ministry of Comfort](#)")

In every age, we hear of professed believers who abandon the faith as soon as they are called to suffer. They are glad enough to express confidence in God as long as his will seems perfectly aligned with their

own, as long as his providence decrees what they would choose anyway. But when they are called to lose instead of gain, to weep instead of laugh, to face poverty instead of prosperity, they quickly turn aside and fall away ([Matthew 13:20–21](#)). Like towers built on sand, many who stand strong in days of calm collapse in days of flood ([Matthew 7:26–27](#)).

No wonder, then, that many unbelievers become convinced that the Christian faith is unequal to great challenges, that Christians will adhere to Christ only while life is easy and circumstances favourable. No wonder, then, that sceptics scoff since they have observed many whose faith was no stronger than its first great challenge. And no wonder, then, that even many sincere believers wonder whether their faith is sufficient for times of deep sorrow, whether it could withstand a dreadful shock. It is just here that Miller's word have been both comforting and challenging.

What the World Needs to See

In times of great sorrow, we naturally long for answers. We long to know why a God who is good and who loves us so dearly has decreed such a painful providence. Miller comforted me with the assurance that we do not need to assume that God is punishing us for sin we have committed or chastising for righteousness we have failed to accomplish. We do not need to believe that these circumstances somehow escaped his notice and darted past his control. We do not need to wonder whether it is all just meaningless and purposeless, as if "all things work together for good" except for gruelling losses.

No, we can be confident that God has important purposes for our suffering, and we can be equally confident that one of these purposes is simply for us to stand strong, to continue to profess our allegiance to him. If Paul could say that his imprisonment "has really served to advance the gospel," why shouldn't we say the same of our bereavements ([Philippians 1:12](#))?

Unbelievers and Christians alike need to be shown that God's people will be as true to him with little as with much, with broken hearts as with whole, with empty hands as with full. All need to be shown that those who blessed God in the giving will praise him still in the taking, that those who weep tears of sorrow will still raise hands of worship, that those who trust him in the green pastures will trust him still when he leads through dark valleys. And this is precisely what my dear friend J.R. Miller called me to.

Still Good in the Valley

By God's grace, I can profess from the valley of the shadow of death that my Shepherd is good. I can attest from a place of deep sorrow that God is providing sweet comfort. I can proclaim that while my heart is broken, my faith is intact. I can affirm that a love for God formed in days of sunshine truly can withstand days of rain. So, too, can my wife and my daughters. We have learned that while our strength is small, God's is great. While our hold on him is weak, his grasp on us is strong. The steadfast love of the Lord has not ceased; his mercies have not come to an end, but have been new every morning. Great has been *his* faithfulness ([Lamentations 3:22–23](#)).

Sunday Services

It is great to have Joe and the family back from their holidays. Joe will be preaching on Sunday morning and we'll be having an evening service (instead of a praise evening) this Sunday at 6pm.

Summer Sunday Club will continue to run during the school holidays and our Equip Sessions will carry on as normal on the first and third Sundays of the month.

Celebration of Heather Akroyd's Life

We were so sorry to hear of Heather Akroyd's passing and want to assure Bob of our continued prayers. Here is the [link](#) to the Celebration Service that took place today at Buccleuch Free Church.

The Summer Appeal 2022 – Closing this Sunday



The graphic features the Holyrood Evangelical Church logo at the top left. To its right is a sun icon with sunglasses and the text 'Summer Appeal 2022'. Below this, there are three photos: a family of five, a woman (Lorna Ferguson), and a man (James Stewart). Text on the left lists: 'Hannu & Hazel Sorsamo Finland', 'Lorna Ferguson Japan', and 'James Stewart Singapore'. There are also 'OMF' logos and 'Wycliffe Bible Translators' text. At the bottom, it says: 'To contribute please use the bank details on holyroodevangelical.org (use reference 'Summer Appeal'), send a cheque to our treasurer, Nick Archer, or speak to your elder.'

Thank you to all those who have given to the Summer Appeal and the Appeal will close this coming Sunday.

The Appeal is open for the support of our missionaries (Lorna Ferguson, the Sorsamo family and James Stewart). Please transfer your gift to the church bank account with the reference 'Summer Appeal' or put it in the plate marked 'Summer Appeal'. If you have any questions, please speak to Nick Archer or your elder.

Mission Prayer Meeting

Save date! We're looking forward to having our next Mission Prayer Meeting with our overseas missionaries on Saturday 6th August at 9am. Zoom codes will be sent out nearer the time.

The Sorsamo Family and James Stewart



It's been wonderful to have the Sorsamos and James with us over the summer. The Sorsamos leave for Finland early on Sunday morning and James flies back to Singapore on Wednesday 3rd August.

Please pray for them as they pack up, say their goodbyes and travel.

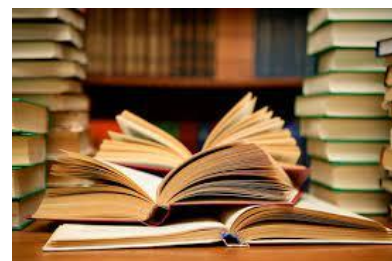


James is away for the weekend so won't be at HEC on Sunday. We're hoping to have an update from him at the prayer meeting this Wednesday.

Summer Reading

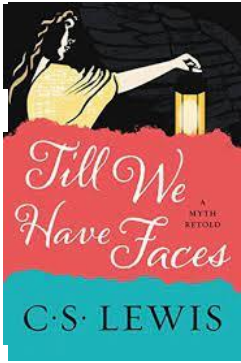
If you're looking for books to read over the summer, please have a look in the church library. There are books on the trolley in the sanctuary as well as some on the shelves in the corridor downstairs.

There is no sign out book so please just return the book when you're finished. Happy reading!



My Favourite Books

By Joe Barnard



A few in the congregation might have asked the question, 'What kind of books does Joe like to read?' August is your chance to find out.

I'm inviting members to a one-off book club in August. This event is open to all ages, men and women. In fact, my hope is to make this an annual event. Each year I'll pick one book that has had a significant impact on my thinking and invite people to come on a Sunday evening for discussion. The book this year will be *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis.

Time: Sunday, August 14th, 5:30-7:00pm

Location: HEC building

Link to order book: [click here](#).

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting on Zoom at 7pm with an update from James Stewart
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching. Please contact Liz by 12 noon on Thursday if you would like a socially distant seat.
 - Evening Service at 6pm (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.



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