

CONFRONTING GRIEF (Job 1-2)

It's sad what we've been listening to this past week concerning the ill-fated expedition to the sunken Titanic. Philip is a great enthusiast of the whole Titanic story. He has had us in the Titanic museums in Belfast, Southampton, Orlando ... and Pearl and I also visited the harbour formerly known as Queenstown (Cobh) in the Republic of Ireland where the Titanic made its last stop before its ill-fated voyage across the Atlantic ocean. ... Of the well-over two thousand passengers and crew on board the ship, more than 1500 lost their lives. They consisted of rich people, poor people, people sailing for the experience, and people sailing to America to begin a new life of hope and success.

Last weekend this submersible vehicle about the size of a minibus descended into the sea about four hundred miles to the south of Newfoundland. At a cost of almost £200,000 each, they were locked securely inside the vessel intending their adventure to last ten hours, - two hours to descend the 12,500 feet to the Titanic, six hours to view the wreck, and two hours to rise the 12,500 feet to the surface. Apparently, the pilot manoeuvred the vehicle with basic computer equipment. The lock on their 'submarine' was on the outside, and there were the bare necessities inside. The adventurers had read the warnings in the form they had signed, and should anything go wrong, the company (Oceangate Expeditions) would not be held liable.

How frightening for the families of those five men waiting on the ship above the sea hoping and *praying* for their loved ones to return safely!

It is one thing to witness disaster on television or to hear about it somewhere in another part of the world ... but how devastating when it enters your own home!

Often in the midst of tragedy we seek answers, and yet answers cannot change the outcome. How do we deal with tragedy, especially as God's people? We believe God is good, and He will not give us anything we are not able to cope with, He is faithful, who will not suffer *[us]* to be tempted *[tested]* above that *[we]* are able; but will with the temptation *[trial]* also make a way to escape, that *[we]* may be able to bear it. And ultimately, He promises it to be for our benefit, all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Rom .8:28). ... Since He loves us as a father loves his children, how do we face grief when it shatters our world?

Where we must begin to attempt to answer this heartbreaking question is by trying to understand **GOD'S PRESENCE** and **GOD'S PROMISES**. ... *Nothing*

happens outside His will. Nothing takes place without His permission. He will not allow anything unless He has a Divine purpose for it. ... Nothing is accidental or incidental for He overrules and rules overall. There is not the slightest occurrence or event outside of His decrees, **1 Cor. 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. Satan can never introduce anything God has not approved. Satan can never surprise God, nor work contrary to God's authority. All the world's governments and thrones are occupied by rulers under God's jurisdiction. Wars and rumours of wars are subject to Him, as are the storms, the earthquakes, the volcanoes, the tsunamis. ... On the other end of the scale, nothing was and is too little for Him to create and nothing is too little for Him to preserve. He is the God Who controls the sun, and He also cares for the sparrow. Not a drop of rain falls without His permission. He has refined every individual droplet. He is King over all the earth, and He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11) ... **Ps. 147:4** He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. ... **8** *He* covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. **9** He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. ... **3** He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. ... **5** Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. ... **11** The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. ... A. W. Tozer wrote about the comfort these truths bring, "Outside of the will of God there is nothing I want. And in the will of God there is nothing I fear".

In the midst of it all though, there *is* **GREAT PAIN** ... and one of the greatest Biblical examples relating to this *great pain* is Job who shows God has a path through tragedies. As is natural, Job sought answers and solutions to his grief. Life for him was as dark as could be, *nevertheless*, in his sorrow and bereavement, from the beginning he wept as he tried to understand, **Job. 1:21** Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. **22** In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. ... He did not *blame* God, instead, he *blessed* God.

God had given him wealth and success, **Job 1:1** There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed *[shunned]* evil. **2** And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. **3** His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that *this man was the greatest of all the men of the east*.

Nonetheless, he became a target to the Sabeans (v.15) and the Chaldeans (v.17) invaders who came and plundered his fields and murdered his workers. At about the same time, **16** The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep,

and the servants, and consumed them. ... Immediately afterwards, he received another even more devastating message, ¹⁸ Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: ¹⁹ And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead. ... These were his beloved children for whom he had prayed earnestly every day (v. 4-5).

How can a person take so much and be expected to keep going? ... His godliness had not prevented the disasters, and neither was he being punished for anything ungodly ... but, as Jesus said, *[God]* maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Mt. 5:43).

God's presence and God's promises, ... and the **great pain**. Job's heart was torn in pieces, - the **GRIEVING PROCESS**. He did not grieve in private, for such was the custom of his day he tore his robe and shaved his head, becoming a public spectacle. Everyone knew he was grieving, and they would draw alongside him to weep and mourn, to share his grief. ... For a whole week, his friends were silent, and how often silence with your friends is all you need.

Is it right for a Christian to mourn and weep for the loss of a loved one? Of course, it is! When our loved ones die 'in Christ' we *grieve* for we miss them. Paul understood when he said, 'ye sorrow', but ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope (I Thess. 4:13). ... We sorrow, even though we know we shall see them again, but it is only natural we mourn and miss them *now*. To grieve is not to signal of a lack of faith, or an indication you have lost confidence in God. Rather, it is normal and natural. ... Jesus wept when Lazarus died. Mary and Martha grieved in the presence of the Saviour. ... The friends of Job did not solve his questions, but during that first week, they joined him in his grief.

The greatest relief when you lose a loved one who died 'in the Lord' is the peace God gives you which is known only to those who shelter in Him. You will see them again in Glory. You will be with them, standing together in the presence of Jesus, never again to be parted. ... D.L. Moody wrote, "Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all, - out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal; a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

This is what Job held onto in the darkest days of his grief for he continued to *worship* and to *hope* in God. He had “an anchor which kept his soul, steadfast and sure as the billows rolled [*for*] he was fastened to the Rock which cannot move ... [*he*] was grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love”. ... How could you cope without the Lord?! That’s the difference you are blessed with as a Christian, in contrast to those who are not. ... While Job lost his family, he kept his faith, for he remained confident in the Lord, *Job 19:25* I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶ And though after my skin worms destroy this body, *yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

And that *is* where our trust in the Lord continues to rest. Last Sunday, - the Lord’s Day, - five men entered the Atlantic ocean never to return to their loved ones. They were rich, educated, highly respected, and they paid a great price to go down into the depths of the sea. ... On their way down, God intervened with the words He will say to us all sooner or later, [*today*] thy soul shall be required of thee (Lk. 12:20). ... And there will come another event we all shall keep for it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

We shall not stand before God as billionaires, or entrepreneurs, or whether we live in a mansion, or drive a fast car ... but we shall leave everything of this world behind and we shall stand before Him either as sinners saved by His grace to be received into His Glory, or we shall be cast out into a lost eternity.

God is supreme. God is sovereign. God is sure. ... **GOD’S PLACE.** When you belong to Him and He belongs to you He holds you in His arms as the loving shepherd embraces the frightened little lamb. ... Safe in the arms of Jesus, and even in grief He holds you next to His heart, and He grieves with you. Through all his heartaches and pain Job honoured God and God honoured him for God told Satan, *still he holdeth fast* his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause (Job 2:3).

... “O safe to the Rock that is higher than I, my soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly” ... “He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved; He giveth me strength as my day” ... “He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength as our labours increase ... Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision, Our God ever yearns His resources to share; Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing, The Father both thee and thy load will uphold”.

The best way to face a crisis is to be strong before it arrives, - Job was already strong before *his* crisis arrived, and yet his heart was broken. Heartache is a part

of life we cannot avoid. ... Someone has described how the sponge absorbs the water, and the more water it absorbs, the better you can use it ... and they suggest it is like the Christian whose faith is constantly 'soaked' in the Lord so that when life 'squeezes' you, you are more able to continue in the strength He gives you.

It was indeed a very sad week for the families who lost those five men in the tragedy ... but there have been many other tragedies in many families in many places this week, and most have not 'made it' onto the headlines. Yet, each loss of leaves families and friends bereft.

As Christians, we have all lost loved ones and that is how it will continue until Christ comes and death is no more, for through His victory on the cross, death has been defeated eternally ... which means death cannot hold onto us the moment God calls us and we shall be taken up to be with Him. Until that day, we are looking forward in anticipation of His company and meeting again our loved ones in Glory ... Fanny Crosby wrote,

Take the world, but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love is mine forever
Through eternal years the same.

Take the world, but give me Jesus,
In His cross my trust shall be
Till with clearer, brighter vision
Face to face my Lord I see.