

Four

JOB AND HIS SUFFERINGS—II

SUFFERING AND THE WILL OF GOD

In the New Testament, the First Letter of Peter and the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians have the most to say about suffering. Particularly undeserved suffering, and suffering in the will of God:

Let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good. (1 Peter 4:19)

Some of us may still have difficulty with suffering being 'in accordance with God's will', or with suffering being brought to us by God, even when it is undeserved or when we are in the right. I would plead with you to hang in there: the whole of the Book of Job will help you with that. As we go through it together, let's see what God is saying to us. There is a very significant verse also in Deuteronomy (32:39):

See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god beside me.
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and no one can deliver from my hand.

Once we can rise to the faith of Job and see all things as coming from God's hand, and in His goodness and love, then we have come to a wonderful place.

THE ENDURANCE OF JOB

We continue now to look at Job and his sufferings, and his own response to them. We saw that 'in all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong-doing' (1:22), and 'in all this Job did not sin with his lips' (2:10)—in what he was saying as a result of what came upon him. At no time did Job become angry with God. We may find that hard to understand. We may find it hard to believe that someone would not be angry with God if that person went through what Job was going through. Perhaps that is because angry is what we would be if the same thing happened to us. Maybe that is how we are now towards God in our lives. As long as we are, we will not understand this book. We need that vision of God's grace that will show that all our angers are groundless.

Job is not angry with God. He has left that far behind. We have seen that he is a man of stature, of godliness, of saintly maturity. Job is mentioned in the New Testament in the Letter of James:

You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near (James 5:8).

That is what gives us patience and hope in suffering: 'the coming of the Lord is near'. That is what Job was looking out for, as we shall see.

Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have

heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful (James 5:9–11)

We are to take as our example of suffering and patience ‘the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord’. It is interesting that Job here seems to be numbered among ‘the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord’. At the end of the book, God says in effect, ‘My servant Job has spoken of me what is right’ (see Job 42:8). So we need to listen to what Job says as the word of the Lord. The book taken as a whole is the word of the Lord, in that steadfastness of Job. Through coming to see and listen and hear what is being said there, we will see the purpose of the Lord, how He is compassionate and merciful.

We saw in Chapter 3 that, although he is steadfast and patient in suffering—he has that godliness and saintly maturity—Job was not stoical or tight-lipped about his suffering. He was quite passionate about it. He gives it full and articulate expression. What we saw there was that he was suffering deeply. He does not hold back on expressing that fully. He wishes he was dead, he wishes he had never been born, if this suffering is the outcome of his life. Part of suffering deeply, with Job, as it was with our Lord himself on the cross, is not to be able to know why this is happening. He does ask ‘Why . . . ?’ in verse 20: ‘Why is light given to one in misery?’ and in verse 23: ‘Why is light given to one who cannot see the way, whom God has fenced in?’ He does ask the question ‘Why . . . ?’ because in that depth of suffering he has no way of knowing what is the rhyme or reason—if there is any—for what is happening to him. But he is not necessarily looking for the answer to that question ‘Why . . . ?’ It is a cry in the form of a question, which simply gives expression to the deep suffering. We saw that this is not the time or place for the answers. When we hear people say in the midst of suffering, ‘Why is this happening?’ we need to take a leaf out of the book of the comforters, when they arrived and kept silence for seven days! There is a place for joining those who suffer in their suffering (as Paul says ‘weep with those who weep’ in Romans 12:15), and not trying to jump to answering their questions. The questions are not necessarily there for answers, and the answers we give won’t hit the spot at that time. It is a time for holding silence, and respecting what is happening.

MEET ME WHERE I AM

We are now going to look through the book at the other significant passages where Job gives expression to his suffering. Then we will come back and we will take each of the comforters separately one at a time: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. So we will be going backwards and forwards through the book. That is why it would be good to have read the whole book right through as it is first, if you have not already done so. In Chapters 4 and 5 Eliphaz speaks, and he says in effect that Job is over-reacting to say all the things he is saying, and that if he just looked at it from the right perspective he would understand, and that would help him! But in Chapter 6 Job still feels rightly that he and his sufferings have not been taken seriously. If his comforters were prepared to acknowledge the nature and intensity of his suffering, they would see that his words are not excessive, to plead for death, or to wish he had never been born. He is not talking for nothing.

6:1 Then Job answered:

2 “O that my vexation were weighed,

and all my calamity laid in the balances!

3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.

See how Job is saying to the people who have come to comfort him, 'You still haven't realised what I am going through.' He is not asking for their pity. He is just being quite factual here, spelling it out. 'If you really understood what has happened to me—if my vexation were weighed and all my calamity laid in the balances—you would find that it is heavier than the sand of the sea. It cannot be weighed. That is why I have been speaking the way I have; that is why my words have been rash. You may think I have been over-reacting, but I have been speaking according to the measure of the suffering that has come into my life, and I am not over-stating the case.'

Then again, as we have seen before, he attributes all this to the direct action of God:

6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.

Then he says:

6:5 Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?

When the wild ass on the plains or the mountain sides is crying out, it is because he is hungry, because he hasn't got food. If the ox has a nice full tummy, when he has eaten his fill of his fodder, he is not going to start bellowing for more. 'But,' says Job, 'I am braying like an ass, I am bellowing like an ox, because I am denied that satisfaction. I would not be doing that, if things are as good as you say they are. You try to comfort me, but everything you have said has not touched me yet.'

6:6 Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any flavour in the juice of mallows?
7 My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is loathsome to me.

'You are trying to give me some comfort, but that's what it tastes like to me—I can't touch it.' ('The juice of mallows' has also been translated 'the slime of the purslane'—a rather tasteless succulent herb. Either way, it is repugnant to him.) 'It is not touching me. So if you are going to say something, say something that is going to meet me where I am.' These are very strong words.

ASKING GOD FOR DEATH

Then he speaks his heart before God, as well as those who are with him. As we will see later, when we study in detail the faith of Job, he continually looks past the others and what they are saying to God Himself, to the action of God. He sees what is happening in his life as coming by the action of God, and it is to the action of God that he looks for his deliverance, and for making some sense of all of this. But here he is not asking for that. Here he is just asking for death, and he is asking God for death:

6:8 "O that I might have my request,

and that God would grant my desire;
 9 that it would please God to crush me,
 that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!
 10 This would be my consolation;
 I would even exult in unrelenting pain;
 for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

That is the consistent stance of Job right through, and it is consistent with what we have seen. He says, 'I am not sinning with my lips. I am not accusing God of wrong.' This is also what God Himself has said of Job: 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason' (2:3). In these verses Job reiterates his desire for the release of death, but it is still the action of God that he looks to, as he always has. As we saw in Chapter 3, there is no thought of suicide here, which tends to occur when people are perhaps preoccupied with themselves and their own problems. It is interesting that this does not occur to Job, because his heart is set on God, not on himself so much. Life and death, he sees, are in God's hands. While he may long for death, it must come only by God's action. So he pleads with God that God would crush him and put an end to his misery. Whatever his 'comforters' or accusers may say—and constantly we find his accusers are trying to say: 'Well, you know, you've really offended against God, and you're being punished by God' (or words to that effect)—Job says, 'No, I'm not going to accept that. I have not denied the words of the Holy One'. 'He still holds fast his integrity'.

In verses 11–13 we see where Job has come to:

11 What is my strength, that I should wait?
 And what is my end, that I should be patient?
 12 Is my strength the strength of stones,
 or is my flesh bronze?
 13 In truth I have no help in me,
 and any resource is driven from me.

He is saying, I am asking for death, but I haven't even got the strength to wait until it comes. I'm just so weak, and helpless. I'm not like stone and bronze—I'm human flesh. I'm frail, and I can't take this, and I've got nothing left. All his strength, all his help, all his resources are completely used up, they are all gone, and there's nothing left.

Our Lord Jesus came to that point on the cross when he cried, 'I thirst.' He had given all that he had, and the Father had given all that He could have given, in His love, and he had nothing left. 'I thirst.'

A BLEAK PROSPECT

We will skip a few verses now, and go to Chapter 7. It is in Chapter 7 that the question is put most keenly. Here Job reaches the depths of utter hopelessness and says to God, 'Why don't You leave me alone?'

7:1 "Do not human beings have a hard service on earth,
 and are not their days like the days of a labourer?
 2 Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
 and like labourers who look for their wages,

- 3 so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.
- 4 When I lie down I say, 'When shall I rise?'
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.
- 5 My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out again.
- 6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.
- 7 "Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.
- 8 The eye that beholds me will see me no more;
while your eyes are upon me, I shall be gone.
- 9 As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so those who go down to Sheol do not come up;
- 10 they return no more to their houses,
nor do their places know them any more.

It is as if we are employed in a job the we don't like doing—that of a labourer or a 'hireling'—from which we get no benefit ourselves. I came to the conclusion once that I am very lucky in that I am doing a job that I like, that I enjoy, and have satisfaction from, because I was talking to some people who said they wished it was like that for them. It was as if they hated what they were doing—they only did it for the money. There may be a lot of people like that, who are like a 'slave' or a hired labourer, who see their time as being a hard service. They just long for the night. Even the radio stations say on Monday morning, 'Don't worry, Friday's coming, when you can get back to the real thing'. That is a general attitude to work in Australia. That is what is being reflected here.

He longs for his wages, but all he gets are months of emptiness and nights of misery. And sleepless nights. Some of us may be able to identify with this, when we have had nights when we just can't get to sleep. When is the morning coming? This is no good—long drawn-out nights, and tossing till the dawn. A little later on, in verse 13, when he is talking about actually getting to sleep, then that is no comfort to him either, because then he is plagued with dreams and nightmares. So there is not much joy in all of that.

The skin hardening and then breaking out again may have been something to do with the disease he had—the sores and pustules going scabby then bursting out again. Medical people have had a lot of interest in trying to diagnose what Job's diseases were—I'm not sure how far they've got. But underneath all of that, we know the feeling: just when it is getting better, then it happens over again. When we were recovering from our accident, after a couple of weeks I thought, We are making some progress here—I am not feeling so much pain—and so you get on with living, and then you suddenly collapse in a heap. And you think, Well, how much longer am I going to have to put up with this? Am I never going to make any headway? One step forward, two steps back—that is how we feel at the time, in the midst of that. Back to square one, or worse. Or maybe you have been told to watch your diet, so that the cholesterol doesn't build up, so you do all the right things—cut out this and cut out that—and then when it is measured again it has gone up! And you think, Oh no—what is going on here? There are ways of coping with that, and ways of managing and getting around those things, but at the time all you feel is despair, and the pain gets to

you, and you think: 'This is never going to get better no matter what I do. I can't do anything to help'. There is utter helplessness and pointlessness about it all: what's the point in trying, if it's not going to make any difference? Perhaps we have sensed something of that.

'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to their end without hope.' Even though the nights are long, yet he is brought to reflect on the brevity and the apparent insignificance of life—like a thread just going through the loom: when it has got to the end or you've run out of thread, well, so what? Where have you got to? Especially when you look at what appears to happen at the end of life: 'Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good.' It is a bleak prospect that Job has in front of him now, as far as he sees. Death will come—he hopes sooner rather than later—but there will be no good in it. 'The eye that beholds me will see me no more': maybe he is talking with the people with him saying: 'You can see me now, but I won't be here for much longer'. But it is not just them, it is God. The Revised Standard Version when God is being addressed uses the old form 'thou'—although it is a bit antiquated, it is helpful in this context for us to see who is being spoken to. Here it says: 'while *thy* eyes are upon me, I shall be gone.' Job knows that he has always been in the eye of God, in the favour of God, and God is looking at him now, and he says, 'but I will not be here much longer'. 'As the cloud fades and vanishes, so those who go down to Sheol do not come up'—when people die, we do not see them again—'they return no more to their houses, nor do their places know them any more.' The house is left empty, they don't return from the funeral, and then that becomes someone else's place, and it is almost as if they were never there, in the end. So there is that pointlessness and that futility: death appears to be the end, without hope.

I WILL COMPLAIN

But just as he comes to that point, such has been Job's relationship with God that he will not be cowed by that. He says, 'No—that can't be everything. That is all I can see, but that can't be everything'. He says, 'Therefore I will not restrain my mouth': 'I'm not going to give up now, I'm not going to bow under all of this. I am going to keep speaking until I am heard':

7:11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
 I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
 I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,
 that you set a guard over me?
13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
 my couch will ease my complaint,'
14 then you scare me with dreams
 and terrify me with visions,
15 so that I would choose strangling
 and death rather than this body.

'I will speak in the anguish of my spirit'—even though anguish of spirit is all that I have, that is what I will speak from. 'I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.' And so he comes before God again. This apparent hopelessness and pointlessness provokes him to press on to know what it is all about, to have it out. He knows he has had better than this with God, and he knows that he must still speak. We might think,

‘Isn’t this being a bit ungodly: to speak before God in this anguish of spirit, to complain to Him in the bitterness of his soul?’ Once again, we are not talking here of accusing God of wrong, or being angry with Him. But we will give full vent to our complaints that we are experiencing at this time. The great saints have prayed in that way. Remember Hannah, in the Book of Samuel:

She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: ‘O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant . . .’ (1 Samuel 1:10–11).

All we have there is Hannah’s words. But look at how Eli responds to those:

As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. (1 Samuel 1:12–13).

The impression that Eli got looking at this woman who was pouring out to God the bitterness of her soul was that she was drunk. So she must have been writhing or rolling around or something—staggering under the weight of this complaint. But she was giving voice to it before God. That is not an inappropriate thing to do. We learn of our Lord himself:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear (Hebrews 5:7).

To button up—especially to button up before God—when you are suffering, is the worst thing you can do. Let God know what is in your heart. Not to accuse Him of wrong, but to cry to Him who is able to save you from death, with loud cries and tears, and to be heard for such godly fear of God.

What does Job say to God? ‘Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, that you set a guard over me?’ Remember how Job is feeling here. Back in chapter 6: ‘I have no help in me, my resources have been driven from me, I have no strength left’. Now he is saying to God: ‘Am I such a big threat to You? Am I like the raging sea that You have to set bounds on me so I don’t go any further, like You did when You created the world? Am I like the sea monster that You have to catch me in a net and try and hold me down? Why are You doing this to me? Am I so dangerous, am I so threatening to You?’ From such a pitiful figure as Job has become, this is real irony.

Then there are those verses about the terrors of sleep: ‘When I say, “My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,” then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that I would choose strangling and death rather than this body’ or ‘rather than these bones’. That reminds us of Lamentations 1:13: ‘From on high hath the Lord sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them’. That is how we used to sing it with the choir in a musical setting of the Lamentations—with the sufferings of Christ in view.

LET ME ALONE

Then we come really to the heart of what Job is saying here. This is the point at which, if we come to an understanding of this, we can draw great strength and hope, even though the whole tenor of this chapter appears to be hopeless:

7:16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.
17 What are human beings, that you make so much of them,
that you set your mind on them,
18 visit them every morning,
test them every moment?
19 Will you not look away from me for a while,
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
20 If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?
21 Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be.

Note a couple of things here. Firstly, contrary to what his comforters say, Job makes no claim to sinless perfection. We have seen that Job is an upright man, and righteous in all his ways, but that is because his heart was with God, and for God, and so, as we would say it now, God's justification was with him, and was being shown in his life. The comforters, as we shall see, say, 'You are trying to say that you have never done anything wrong, and that you don't deserve any of this, and we're telling you that you must have'. And Job says, 'That's not the point! I'm not claiming here that I've never done anything wrong'. He freely admits here, and in another place where he talks about the sins of his youth, in his rashness there, that he is a sinner. Who is not? He does say: 'If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity? . . . Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity?' There is no word for 'If' in the Hebrew: Job says plainly: 'I have sinned'.¹ So he never says that he does not have sin, that he does not have transgression, that he does not have iniquity. He is only too aware of his sins. Not that he thinks his suffering is punishment for them—he won't accept that. That is important to realise. He never comes to saying that. But in this situation he feels his sins pressing on him very keenly, as we all do. Our first thought when suffering or pain come upon us is: 'Well, what have I done to deserve this? Where have I put a foot wrong?' It brings our sins to remembrance. Job is in that situation. But he won't say that what is happening to him is punishment for his sins.

Secondly, here it is to God that Job speaks from the depths of his suffering. It is the action of God alone that he acknowledges in all this. As Jesus did on the cross. If we think that Job is speaking out of turn by saying that God has brought all this upon him, let us hear carefully the words of our Lord Jesus, when he says, 'It is written, "I [God] will strike the shepherd [Christ], and the sheep will be scattered"' (Mark 14:27). That is how he went into his sufferings: knowing fully that is what would happen—that it was 'necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory' (Luke 24:26 RSV). Necessary, by the will of God, that this should happen. And the apostles, with great power and joy, after his resurrection, said that Herod and Pontius Pilate—they were doing their darnedest, and they are responsible for what they did, as evil and wicked men—but they did no more than 'your hand [God] and your plan had predestined to take place' (see Acts 4:27, 2:23). So it is to God that Job comes. And it is in that questioning, addressed to God

¹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1975, p. 138.

Himself, that we can sense a great wealth of hope and strength. I don't want to speak for God here—God is going to speak for Himself all in good time before the end of the Book of Job. But what is the answer to these questions, or what is raised by these questions: 'What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them, visit them every morning, test them every moment?' What *are* we, if this is going on? In answer to these questions, we can say that life must really be worth something incredibly worthwhile; there must be tremendous issues being worked through that we can hardly see; God must have an amazingly high regard for our dignity as His creatures, if He *will not leave us alone*: if He will continue to bother us, if He will take us through all this and still keep us going. What I am saying is that Chapter 7, far from demeaning humanity as some insignificant pawn in the hands of a capricious and uncaring God, actually accords to us an amazing honour and dignity as the high creature with whom God is mightily concerned, on whom He is prepared to expend incredible cost and trouble, to bring about His purposes. Chapter 7 does not tell us what the outcome of that will be, and what this great cause is, that God is taking us through all this to get to. It only asks the question. The New Testament tells us:

no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9)

I believe that this, which we shall know in Christ, is the answer to the question Job is asking here. Chapter 7 simply asks the question in such a manner as to open the way for the revelation that is yet to come.

SUNLESS GLOOM

To conclude this look at Job in his suffering, let us read through Chapter 30. Remember we looked at Chapter 29, when Job was thinking back to how wonderful life was when he was in his prosperity before he suffered. Remember the great things we learned from that about Job and God's favour and blessing upon him. Now by contrast, over against that, he sets out where he has come to now. We see it, towards the end of the book, set out in full. Naturally, at the beginning, Job is completely wrapped up in his own sufferings. By the end of the book, in Chapter 30, he sees the broad scope of what is going on: the social and other implications of what is happening to him.

30:1 But now they make sport of me,
 those who are younger than I,
 whose fathers I would have disdained
 to set with the dogs of my flock.
2 What could I gain from the strength of their hands?
 All their vigour is gone.
3 Through want and hard hunger
 they gnaw the dry and desolate ground,
4 they pick mallow and the leaves of bushes,
 and to warm themselves the roots of broom.
5 They are driven out from society;
 people shout after them as after a thief.
6 In the gullies of [creek-beds] they must live,
 in holes in the ground, and in the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they bray;

under the nettles they huddle together.
 8 A senseless, disreputable brood,
 they have been whipped out of the land.

He is talking here about the outcasts of society: the most contemptible, weedy people you could imagine, people who are quite unemployable. We saw in Chapter 29 that Job made a point of aiding the poor and wretched, but these, it appears, are those beyond even such help. They must be the lowest of the low. He is saying, I used not to have to bother what they would think of me, but now they are the ones who have got the upper hand on me.

30:9 And now they mock me in song;
 I am a byword to them.
 10 They abhor me, they keep aloof from me;
 they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me.

So Job has now become lower than the lowest of the low. They are now abusing him in his suffering:

30:11 Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me,
 they have cast off restraint in my presence.
 12 On my right hand the rabble rise up;
 they send me sprawling,
 and build roads for my ruin.
 13 They break up my path,
 they promote my calamity;
 no one restrains them.

Thus the rabble are now unrestrained against Job.

30:14 As through a wide breach they come;
 amid the crash they roll on.
 15 Terrors are turned upon me;
 my honour is pursued as by the wind,
 and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.

Jesus was in no different position when he was hung on a cross on a rubbish heap outside Jerusalem.

30:16 And now my soul is poured out within me;
 days of affliction have taken hold of me.
 17 The night racks my bones,
 and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.
 18 With violence he seizes my garment;
 he grasps me by the collar of my tunic.
 19 He [God] has cast me into the mire,
 and I have become like dust and ashes.
 20 I cry to you [God] and you do not answer me;
 I stand, and you merely look at me.
 21 You have turned cruel to me;
 with the might of your hand you persecute me.
 22 You lift me up on the wind, you make me ride on it,
 and you toss me about in the roar of the storm.
 23 I know that you will bring me to death,

and to the house appointed for all living.

So again we see Job addressing God directly in his anguish.

30:24 Surely one does not turn against the needy,
when in disaster they cry for help.
25 Did I not weep for those whose day was hard?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
26 But when I looked for good, evil came;
and when I waited for light, darkness came.
27 My inward parts are in turmoil, and are never still;
days of affliction come to meet me.
28 I go about in sunless gloom;
I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.
29 I am a brother of jackals,
and a companion of ostriches.
30 My skin turns black and falls from me,
and my bones burn with heat.
31 My lyre is turned to mourning,
and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.

That is Job's suffering, and it is not to be made light of.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank You that You do not leave us alone, even when we wish You would. We thank You that You have set Your heart on us before the foundation of the world; that You have been determined on nothing less than to bring us to Yourself as Your own children, holy and blameless before You in love, for us to enjoy what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart has conceived: the good things that You have prepared for those who love You. We thank You that You did not stop from sending Your own Son to the suffering of the cross to bring this about, and that You will not stop at anything that is necessary in our lives and in the life of this world to bring us to the glory that You have purposed for us. Thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit that we may know our union with Christ and the foretaste in him even now of these good things to come. May this make us proof in the midst of whatever suffering comes to us and to others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.