

Condensed Milk

"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...." 1 Peter 2:2

Job: The Word on Suffering -- Part 16 (Based on Job 3:1-26)

A friend emailed me this week saying, "Any major problem in life is no real problem to handle if you can hear God's voice. Right now my biggest problem is that I don't hear Him".

The silence of God was the hardest part of Job's suffering. He had lost everything, he was in great physical pain, his friends had turned against him, but the worst thing was the silence and seeming absence of God. What the book of Job tells us is that in actual fact God is in our suffering even when it does not feel like it.

We learn in the first two chapters that Satan roams the earth to kill and destroy but that God holds him on a leash. For example, Satan complains that God has put a hedge of protection around Job so that he cannot attack him as he would like. When Satan is able to attack Job it is only by the permission of God and only within certain restrictions,

"The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in our hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger" (1:12). I think it is safe to infer that if God did not restrain Satan our sufferings, and that of the whole world, would be horrifically worse.

God does not allow suffering because he is up against a force greater than himself. And if that is true it must be that God allows suffering to accomplish his own purpose in human history and in our lives. By the end of Job we see that Job's suffering crushed him into a deeper appreciation for God.

Such is the pride and self-sufficiency of even the best human heart that only through brokenness do we really see God. In coming to the end of ourselves and in seeing God we are transformed. For this reason, and in that sense, we should embrace suffering. We should accept suffering and allow it to do God's work in us.