

Poor and Afflicted*Thomas Kelly (1769–1855)*

“Poor and afflicted,” Lord, are Thine,
Among the great unfit to shine;
But though the world may think it strange,
They would not with the world exchange.

“Poor and afflicted,” ‘tis their lot,
They know it, and they murmur not;
‘Twould ill become them to refuse
The state their Master deign’d to choose.

“Poor and afflicted,” yet they sing,
For Jesus in their glorious King;
Through sufferings perfect now He reigns
And shares in all their griefs and pains.

“Poor and afflicted,” but ere long
They join the bright, celestial throng;
Their sufferings then will reach a close,
And heaven afford them sweet repose.

And while they walk the thorny way,
They oft are heard to sigh and say,
“Dear Savior, come, oh quickly come,
And take Thy mourning pilgrims home.”

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Helping Those Who Suffer***Jon Pratt*

In this sin-cursed world suffering is inevitable. Jesus said so: “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). Paul said so: “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Phil 1:29). Peter said so: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21). And this is why Paul’s exhortations to believers asking them to weep with those who weep (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 12:26) ring so true for every believer. There are always brothers and sisters in Christ who need us to suffer with them. So how do we show genuine compassion to the sufferers among us?

Before thinking about what we can do for the one who is going through a time of difficulty, we need to discuss what we should *not* do. First, never avoid the person, unconsciously treating him or her like someone with a contagious disease. Second, when talking with the person, don’t dance around the subject of their suffering by talking about something—anything—else. Third, don’t offer pious platitudes (e.g. “He’s in a better place”; “at least your other children are doing well”; “God is good all the time”) or offer simplistic or judgmental spiritual advice (e.g. “What is God teaching you in the middle of this trial?” or “Romans 8:28 is still true” or “What sin is God revealing to you in this situation?”).

Often the best thing we can do is to be present, even if we cannot think of anything helpful to say. Job’s friends offered their greatest aid to Job without ever saying a word as they sat with him for seven days and nights (Job 2:13). At the very least, we can help by merely showing up.

This is especially important when reaching out to those whose suffering is not widely known, e.g. the prodigal child, a broken marriage, mental health struggles, physical or sexual abuse. When the circle of knowledge is limited, it is essential for those that are aware to make steps toward the sufferer to acknowledge, listen, pray, and offer hope. Though these more private struggles draw out our own insecurity and inadequacy to know how to respond, a simple honest statement of care can be the balm of Christ for those on a lonely path.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centralseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

Since everyone's suffering is unique, I would be unwise to assert a list of specific instructions one should follow when trying to obey the biblical mandate to weep with the weeping. Sometimes our best intentions to help may result in awkward silence, spontaneous weeping, or angry outbursts. But do not be swayed from seeking to love wisely and compassionately. Assure the sufferer of your love, not just in words but in actions. One sure way to do this is to pray for him. Depending on how relationally close you are to the other person, you may want to ask him how you can pray for him. But if this sort of intimate question seems too awkward, one can always pray Scripture truths for the sister or brother. And I challenge you to share these specific requests afterward with the sufferer so that he or she can be reminded of these spiritual realities and can know that he has a friend who is faithfully bringing these requests before our great High Priest.

Here are four petitions we can bring to God on behalf of the sufferer:

1. I am praying that you will know that God is *for* you.

Paul writes in Romans 8:31-34, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

2. I am praying that you will know that God is *with* you.

David reminds us in Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Jesus promises us in Matthew 28:20, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

And Isaiah records God's words in Isaiah 43:1-2, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you will shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."

3. I am praying that you will know, feel, and enjoy the *love* of God.

Paul writes in Romans 8:35, 38-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And again he writes in Ephesians 3:17-19, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

4. I am praying that you will know, feel, and enjoy the *peace* of God.

Jesus says in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

And I am praying this blessing for you from Numbers 6:24-26: "May the LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

Are these not beautiful promises from God's Word? To be reminded that God is for us and with us and that He loves us and gives us peace will help to encourage and lift up the countenance of any believer, especially those who are in the middle of great trials. Of course, God gives many other promises not mentioned here which could be used in praying for and weeping with our hurting brothers and sisters, but these are a good beginning.

May God give us the grace to see those who are hurting and to obey His command to reach out to them with tender compassion just as our Savior loved us and gave Himself for us (1 John 4:9-11).



This essay is by Jon Pratt, Vice President of Academics and Professor of New Testament at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
