

We Praise Thee, O God*Julia C. Cory (1882–1963)*

We praise Thee, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring;
we lay it before Thee, we kneel and adore Thee,
we bless Thy holy Name, glad praises we sing.

We worship Thee, God of our fathers, we bless Thee;
through life's storm and tempest our Guide hast Thou been;
when perils o'ertake us, escape Thou wilt make us,
and with Thy help, O Lord, our battles we win.

With voices united our praises we offer,
to Thee, great Jehovah, glad anthems we raise;
Thy strong arm will guide us, our God is beside us,
to Thee, our great Redeemer, forever be praise.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Tried With Fire: Finally: Mystery***Kevin T. Bauder*

The book of Job makes sense to us readers because we know what happened outside the story. We know that Job was a righteous man. We know that Satan slandered Job before God, and we know that God granted Satan permission to test Job. We know that Job's sufferings were part of a larger cosmic drama. We also know how the story turned out.

If we place ourselves in the world of the story, however, it makes considerably less sense. Job is a righteous man upon whom God's blessing rests. Suddenly God's blessing is removed, only to be replaced by something that appears to be God's judgment. Inside the story Job's friends draw all the wrong conclusions. Job himself is confused. He feels betrayed. He balks at the treatment that he is receiving.

Too often we assume that Job eventually came around to God's point of view because he was given the explanation for his trials. After all, we know the explanation, so why shouldn't Job? This assumption, however, overlooks an important consideration. *Nowhere in the book does God tell Job what is happening.* Job never receives an explanation—yet in the end he submits to God in worship and awe.

Rather than offering an explanation, God confronted Job with His own power, care, and wisdom. Job saw God as bigger, and himself as smaller, than he had ever imagined. Job also realized that God was deeply involved in the daily nurture of His creatures. God showed Job that He was providing food even for wild beasts, overseeing their birth and growth, giving them homes, and matching their natures to their habitat (Job 38:39-39:30). Had these matters been left to Job, creation would have come undone.

When Job understood the wisdom, power, and care of God, he no longer required any explanation of his circumstances. Quite the opposite: Job realized that he had tried to criticize God in ignorance, and now he repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:1-6). Job did not need to understand his circumstances. He needed to know God, for God is worthy of trust.

Trust is the fundamental issue. Whenever we begin to complain about the trauma that God allows in our lives, we are implicitly calling into question His wisdom, His power, or His care. We suspect that God does not know



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

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what He is doing, or that He is not paying attention to our circumstance, or that He is not able to secure the best for us, or that He simply does not care. Rarely would we state our objections in just those words, but they really do summarize what we feel.

God permits pain in the lives of every one of His children. The world is filled with natural suffering, which results from the Fall. God cancels none of that suffering for His people. In addition, believers endure suffering that is meant to accomplish a whole series of spiritual goods in their lives. Normally, believers experience *more* distress and affliction than the unsaved. Sometimes we are able to discern the reasons why God permits a particular affliction. Often we are not.

God does not owe us any explanations. Very often (as with Job) He does not offer us any. He simply shows us Himself as He has made His character plain through His Word. Then He invites us to trust Him.

We will face times when we stare into the abyss of suffering and yearn for it to be removed. To us the affliction may seem like an unending and senseless obstruction that even thwarts our good intentions toward God. We sometimes beg God to take it away—perhaps repeatedly. In response to our prayers God may, in His good pleasure, remove the sorrow. Alternatively, He may help us to understand exactly why we are facing it. Much of the time, however, He simply says to us, as He did to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor 12:9). We often receive no other explanation this side of heaven.

God knows what He is doing. We do not need to. We may be completely clueless about our circumstances, but we know who God is. His wisdom and power are evident in His creation. His love for us is clearly revealed on the cross (Rom 5:8). We do not have to know what He is doing. We simply have to trust the One who “hath done all things well” (Mark 7:37).

We need not accept quietist views of the Christian life to recognize that we can and should rest in God. When the north winds of affliction howl into our lives and we risk being buried under deep drifts of sorrow, we can find our rest and peace in God. There is a kind of repose that comes through faith when we trust Him because we know who and what He is. We do not always need an explanation. We do always need Him.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology 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.
