

If God Is Good (Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil) by Randy Alcorn,, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, 2009 (99 Quotes selected by Doug Nichold)

INTRODUCTION

1. Truth must touch both heart and mind.

Though I write personally, from the heart, and tell stories of great courage and perspective, I must also present a case from Scripture and appeal to logic. But remember this: you are a whole person, and the path to your heart travels through your mind. Truth matters. To touch us at the heart level-and to keep touching us over days, months, years, and decades-truth must work its way into our *minds*. [page 3]

2. God's truth about Himself.

In writing his magnificent story of redemption, God has revealed truths about himself, us, the world, goodness, evil, suffering, and Heaven and Hell. Those truths God reveals to us teem with life. The blood of man and God flows through them. God speaks with passion, not indifference; he utters fascinating words, not dull ones. To come to grips with the problem of evil and suffering, you must do more than hear heart-wrenching stories about suffering people. You much hear God's truth to help you interpret those stories. [page 3,4]

3. God gives Himself.

God, like a father, doesn't just give advice. He gives himself. He becomes the husband to the grieving widow (Isaiah 54:5). He becomes the comforter to the barren woman (Isaiah 54:1). He becomes the father of the orphaned (psalm 10:14). He becomes the bridegroom to the single person (Isaiah 62:5). He is the healer to the sick (Exodus 15:26). He is the wonderful counselor to the confused and depressed (Isaiah 9:6). Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes [page 4]

CHAPTER 1. Understanding the Problem of Evil and Suffering

4. Evil and suffering worldwide.

In Sudan, millions, including children, have been murdered, raped, and enslaved. The 2004 Asian tsunami killed more than 280,000 people. Malaria causes more than two million fatalities annually, the majority of them African children. Around the world, some 26,500 children die every day; eighteen every minute. [10]

5. A different perspective on suffering.

Pastor James Montgomery Boice had a clearer perspective. In May 2000, he stood before his Philadelphia church and explained that he'd been diagnosed with liver cancer:

Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles-and He certainly can-is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition... Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying Himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified Himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though He could have...

God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by... God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything He does is good... If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you'd change it, you'd make it worse. It wouldn't be as good. [page 14,15]

CHAPTER 2. What Is the Problem of Evil and Suffering?

6.A mother's sacrifice to save her daughter.

Someone told me the story of a teenager who didn't want to be seen in public with her mother, because her mother's arms were terribly disfigured. One day when her mother took her shopping and reached out her hand, a clerk looked horrified. Later, crying, the girl told her mother how embarrassed she was. Understandably hurt, the mother waited an hour before going to her daughter's room to tell her, for the first time, what had happened. "When you were a baby, I woke up to a burning house. Your room was an inferno. Flames were everywhere. I could have gotten out the front door, but I decided I'd rather die with you than leave you to die alone. I ran through the fire and wrapped my arms around you. Then I went back through the flames, my arms on fire. When I got outside on the lawn, the pain was agonizing, but when I looked at you, all I could do was rejoice that the flames hadn't touched you." Stunned, the girl looked at her mother through new eyes. Weeping in shame and gratitude, she kissed her mother's marred hands and arms. May we learn to see the problem of evil and suffering through new eyes. [page 22,23]

CHAPTER 3. What Is Evil, and How Does It Differ from Suffering?

7. Two forms of moral evil.

Psalm 2 describes earthly kings standing against God and his anointed one and declaring, "let us break their chains." God scoffs at them and replies that he has installed his king on Zion-and they have no hope of conquering his Chosen One (see 2:2-6).

Evildoers not only reject God's law and create their own; they attempt to take the moral high ground by calling God's standards "unloving," "intolerant," and "evil."

Moral evil comes in two forms-blatant evil that admits its hatred for goodness, and subtle evil that professes to love goodness while violating it. [page 25]

8. Leper praises God for her disease which brought her to Him.

Howard Hendricks tells of visiting a leprosy center in India. The morning he arrived, the residents were gathered for a praise service. One of the women with leprosy hobbled to the platform. Hendricks said that even though she was partially blind and badly disfigured, she was one of the most beautiful women he'd ever seen.

Raising both of her nearly fingerless hands toward Heaven, she said in a clear voice, "I want to praise God that I am a leper because it was through my leprosy that I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior. And I would rather be a leper who knows Christ than be completely whole and a stranger to His grace." [page 28,29]

CHAPTER 4. What Are Some Possible Responses to the Problem of Evil and Suffering?

9. God will ultimately defeat evil.

God is all good, all powerful, and all knowing; he hates evil and will ultimately judge evildoers, and remove evil and suffering after accomplishing a greater, eternal good. [page 34]

10. Prepare for times of suffering by studying the Word of God.

Martin Niemoller, a courageous German pastor, spent years in a concentration camp because he spoke out against the ungodly influence that Adolf Hitler's regime exerted on the German church. Niemoller later said about the Bible,

What did this book mean to me during the long and weary years of solitary confinement and then for the last four years at Dachau? The Word of God was simply everything to me-comfort and strength, guidance and hope, master of my days and companion of my nights, the bread which kept me from starvation and the water of life that refreshed my soul.

Darrell Scott's daughter Rachel was the first to die in 1999's Columbine school shooting. I asked Darrell what we should do to prepare for evil and suffering. Without hesitation he said, "Become a student of God's word."

Darrell's view on God already had a firm place in his heart when Rachel died. He trusted from the first that God had a purpose. While this did not remove his pain, it did provide solid footing from which he could move forward, trusting God instead of resenting him.

In my experience, most Christians lack grounding in God's attributes, including his sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, justice, and patience. We dare not wait for the

time of crisis to learn perspective! “Don’t be content to be hand-fed by others,” Darrell said. “Do your own reading and study, devour good books, talk about the things of God.” [page 38]

CHAPTER 5. A Closer Look at Central Issues in the Problem of Evil

11. God’s gift of cerebral palsy.

Gianna Jessen, as a preborn child, survived a botched saline abortion. Gianna says that while the saline solution was burning her alive, “The lack of oxygen to my brain is what caused my gift of cerebral palsy.” Upon hearing her call cerebral palsy a “gift,” some feel perplexed, but Gianna has had her whole life to think about it.

She doesn’t see God as merely “permitting” her suffering or “using” it. She considers her cerebral palsy a gift from God’s hand. She doesn’t deny that the choices of her mother and the actions of a physician caused her condition and the terrible evil inflicted upon her. And yet, Gianna sees God’s hand even in her suffering. [page 40]

CHAPTER 6. Evil’s Entry into the Universe: A Rebellion of Angels

12. Satan’s power is under God’s authority.

Satan and God do not engage in hand-to-hand combat, with Satan sometimes getting the edge. That’s not the Bible; that’s *Star Wars*. Many of us make Satan too big and God too small.

True, we have not yet reached the time when we no longer suffer casualties, Satan is called the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4, ESV), “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2, ESV) and one of the “cosmic powers over this present darkness” (Ephesians 6:12, ESV). But Scripture always describes Satan’s power in the context of God’s absolute sovereignty. Satan remains under God’s authority at all times. The devil is nowhere close to being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, or anything like God. [page 52]

13. God will be glorified through Satan’s defeat.

John Piper writes, “Satan’s fall and ongoing existence are for the glory of Christ. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, will be more highly honored and more deeply appreciated and loved in the end because he defeats Satan not the moment after Satan fell, but through millennia of long-suffering, patience, humility, servanthood, suffering, and decisively through his own death.” [page 53]

14. God delays Satan’s judgment to extend grace to people.

Every day that God delays his final judgment against Satan is one more day to extend his grace to a needy world. And it is one more day for his kindness in Christ to

accomplish in this fallen world the work for which we will be praising him ten million years from now. [page 54]

CHAPTER 8. Inherited Sin and Our Sin Nature

15. John Newton's story.

As a young crewman, when his ship nearly sank, Newton professed Christ. But he spent years committing evil before he experienced a true conversion. He left the slave trade and felt increasing remorse for what he'd done. For the last half of his life he pastured a church near London, where he preached the gospel, taught the Scriptures, and eventually spoke against the slave trade, encouraging young parliamentarian William Wilberforce in his battle to outlaw slavery.

At age eighty-two, shortly before his death, a physically blind and spiritually sighted John Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour."

Newton's tombstone reads, "John Newton... once an infidel... was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy." [page 62]

16. Making light of our sin makes light of Christ's cross.

We may feel tempted to underestimate the horrors of the Cross, because to recognize them is to admit that our monstrous evil demanded a price so horrific. To make light of our sin is to make light of Christ's cross. [page 66]

17. America's downward moral direction.

Highly educated people who disbelieve in human evil often believe that human government is the root of, and solution to, the world's problems. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, at Harvard's 1978 commencement, spoke of the downward moral direction of American freedom:

This tilt of freedom toward evil has come about gradually, but it evidently stems from a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which man-the master of this world- does not bear any evil within himself, and all the defects of life are caused by misguided social systems, which must therefore be corrected. [page 72]

CHAPTER 9. A Deeper Consideration of What Our Sin Nature Does and Doesn't Mean

18. Failure to do right is as evil as doing wrong.

God makes clear it isn't enough to refrain from oppressing or robbing people. The failure to do right is as evil as doing wrong (see Jeremiah 22:2-3). Consider the ship *St. Louis*, dramatized in the 1976 motion picture *Voyage of the Damned*. The *St. Louis*,

with its Jewish passengers from Germany seeking asylum, was turned away in Cuba. Then, President Franklin Roosevelt refused permission for it to land in the United States. The ship tried next to enter Canada but was denied again. It returned to Europe, where the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands accepted some of the passengers. Many later died when Germany invaded three of those countries.

The U.S. and Canada were aware that the Jews on the *St. Louis* already had endured *Kristallnacht*, Germany's state-sponsored pogrom that resulted in hundreds of Jewish shops destroyed, synagogues burned, and thousands put in concentration camps. Yet both nations turned away these Jewish refugees whose ship had already reached their shores. True, U.S. and Canadian immigration regulations restricted the numbers of immigrants of various nationalities, and other German citizens were waiting their turn. But given the violent and escalating aggression against Jews in Germany, couldn't an exception have been made?

We speak of Germany's evil but both the United States and Canada didn't care enough about these defenseless people to open their borders to them, and as a result many of them died. Had Germany not threatened Europe and our own country, but simply executed millions of Jews within its borders, would we ever have come to their defense?

We like to think we're made of better stuff, but we are all part of the same fallen race.
[page 75]

19. Thinking too lightly of sin makes Christ's sacrifice unnecessary.

If we don't give the word *sinner* its actual meaning, we miss the point. When we cut *wretch* out of "Amazing Grace," we reduce it to something more sensible, less surprising. If we weren't so bad without Christ, then why did he have to endure the cross? Paul said if men were good enough without Jesus, then "Christ died for nothing" (Galatians 2:21).

Charles Spurgeon put it this way: "Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Saviour." We try to explain away sin in terms of a "bad day" or "that's not what I meant" or "I did what my father always did to me" or "I wouldn't have done this if you hadn't don't that." All these statements minimize our evil and thereby *minimize the greatness of God's grace in atoning for our evil*.

Grace isn't about God lowering his standards. It's about God fulfilling those standards through the substitutionary suffering of Jesus Christ. Grace never ignores or violates truth. Grace gave what truth demanded: the ultimate sacrifice for our wickedness.

God's grace is greater than my sin. But my ability to measure the greatness of his grace depends upon my willingness, in brokenness before him, to recognize the greatness of

my sin. “God opposed the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). The proud deny their evil; the humble confess it.

A profound awareness of my evil should move my heart to praise God for the wonders of his grace. [page79]

20. Examples from the Bible of people who were called “good.”

Common grace is God’s means by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not a part of salvation. Not every person experiences saving grace, but all people—without exception, even unrepentant sinners—daily experience common grace. Even fallen humanity enjoys a residual goodness in a world that God still oversees and holds together (see Colossians 1:17).

Jesus said God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good—which must mean some people are good in some sense (see Matthew 5:45). He declared, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (verse 16). People *can* do good deeds. The master calls his servant “good and faithful” (Matthew 25:21). Joseph or Arimathea was a “good and upright man” (Luke 23:50). [page 81]

21. G.K. Chesterton’s shortest essay in history.

G.K. Chesterton wrote perhaps the shortest essay in history. The London *Times* asked various writers for essays on the topic “What’s Wrong with the World?” Chesterton replied,

Dear Sirs:

I am.

Sincerely yours,

G.K. Chesterton

CHAPTER 10. Natural Disasters: Creation Under the Curse of Human Evil

22. The father who kept his promise to always be there for his son.

In 1988, an Armenian earthquake killed forty-five thousand. In the chaos, one man made his way to his son’s school, only to find nothing but rubble. Other parents stumbled around dazed and weeping, calling out their children’s names. But this father ran to the back corner of the building where his son’s classroom once was, and began digging.

To everyone else, it seemed hopeless. How could his son have survived? But this father had promised he would always be there for his boy, so he heaved rocks and dug, calling for his son by name: “Armand!”

Well-meaning parents and bystanders tried to pull him out of the rubble. “It’s too late!” “They’re dead!” “There’s nothing you can do!” The fire chief tried to pull him away saying, “Fires and explosions are happening everywhere. You’re in shock. You’re endangering others. Go home. We’ll handle it!”

But the man continued to dig, hour after hour-eight hours, then twelve, twenty –four, thirty-six hours. Finally, in the thirty-eighth hour of digging-a day and a half after everyone told him to give up hope-he called his son’s name again, pulled back a big rock, and heard his son’s voice.

“Armand!” the father screamed.

From under the rocks came the words, “Dad? I told them! I told the others kids that if you were still alive, you’d save me!”

The father helped his son and thirteen other children climb out of the rubble. When the building had collapsed, the children survived in a tentlike pocket. The father lovingly carried his son home to his mother. When the townspeople praised Armand’s father for saving the children, he simply explained, “I promised my son, ‘No matter what, I’ll be there for you!’ [page 89, 90]

1 Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger press, 1998), 13-14.

CHAPTER 11. A Case Study: Bart Ehrman, a “Christian” Who Lost His Faith

23. What can be done to help young people in their faith.

In light of the great number of young people who reject their faith as college students or young adults, we need to ask ourselves two questions: What are we doing to help nominally Christian young people come to a true faith in Christ? And what are we doing to help youthful genuine Christians go deeper in exploring Scripture, learning sound theology, and developing a truly Christian world-view, not a superficial one?[page 101]

CHAPTER 12. Non-Theistic Worldviews Lack a Substantial Basis for Condemning Evil

24. The atheist and morality.

If there’s no God, people don’t live after death and aren’t held accountable for their actions, good or evil. That’s why Dostoevsky said, “Destroy a man’s belief in immorality and... everything would be permitted, even cannibalism.”

To say that an atheistic worldview provides no basis for the existence of good and evil does *not* mean that atheists have no sense of right and wrong. They do. They live in a culture influenced by a historic belief in God and the morality revealed in Scripture.

This provides them a residual basis for believing that moral categories are important, while their own worldview doesn't.

How does an atheistic worldview explain an atheist's morals? Suppose time, chance, and natural forces accounted for us. If we could move from nonlife to life and from irrational to rational-quantum leaps, to say the least-then what more could we do than invent pragmatic social rules to govern group behavior? Since the powerful make the rules and they would survive longer by making the weak serve them, then why would anyone but the weak want life to change? [page 110]

25. Atheists cannot argue against evil without acknowledging God.

In theory, the atheist could argue that the problem of evil is simply an internal inconsistency within Christianity. Without agreeing that true evils exist in the world, he could still say that the Christian belief in evil is inconsistent with belief in a good God.

I've read many atheists, however, and this is *not* typically what they argue. Instead, they present long lists of things that *they* call evil. But this poses a problem for them. In calling these things evil, the non-theist tries to hold God accountable to moral standards that can exist *only if there is a God*. This puts atheists in a no-win situation. If God does not exist, then there can be no ultimate right or wrong and no objective standards of goodness or evil beyond personal opinion or the majority votes of human cultures. But when he argues against God on the basis of the problem of evil, then he emphatically affirms there *is* such a thing as evil. Two results follow:

If real evil does exist, then the atheist's case collapses.

If real evil does not exist, then the atheist's case also collapses.

Dinesh D'Souza writes,

If we are purely material beings, then we should no more object to mass murder than a river objects to drying up in a drought... Our ability to distinguish between good and evil, and to recognize these as real, means that there is a moral standard in the universe that provides the basis for this distinction. And what is the source of that moral standard if not God?

The Christian worldview's shaping influence on the Western world, to which most atheists strenuously object, is *exactly* what creates the moral tension needed to reveal evil and suffering as a moral problem. [page 112, 113]

26. Peter Singer's worldview on disabled infants and adults and the elderly.

Speaking to the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, Dr. L. D. Rue argued that people are better off if we deceive ourselves into believing a "Noble Lie"

which will make us *think* (even though it isn't so) that humanity and the universe have value.

The *New Yorker* called Princeton philosophy teacher Peter Singer “the most influential philosopher alive.” The *New England Journal of Medicine* claims Singer has had “more success in effecting changes in acceptable behavior” than any philosopher since Bertrand Russell.

Singer proposed that we shouldn't declare children alive until twenty-eight days after birth, allowing parents time to decide whether they wish to dispose of their children without legal consequences.

He wrote, “If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication and, anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant.

Singer, like Sam Harris, builds his ethics on the notion of happiness. But notice where it takes him: “When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed. The loss of happy life for the first infant is outweighed by the gain of a happier life for the second. Therefore, if killing the hemophiliac infant has no adverse effect on others, it would... be right to kill him.”

When Singer was appointed a Princeton professor, a disabilities right group named Not Dead yet protested his arrival. They objected to Singer's books, which promote the legalization of killing disabled infants as well as children and adults with severe cognitive disabilities. (Parents paying for their children to attend Singer's classes might be interested in knowing that he also provides a “moral justification” for killing the elderly.)

Each of us should reflect seriously on this question: If everyone acted as if Singer's worldview were true, then what would our culture look like? Would there be more good and less evil?

And more to the point: if you have a physical disability, cognitive impairment, or senior citizen's discount, would you want to live in Singer's world? (Even if the answer is yes, you wouldn't be allowed to live there very long.) [page 115, 116]

CHAPTER 13. The Unbeliever's Problem of Goodness

27. Organizations helping others are mainly founded by Christians, not atheists.

Dawkins, Hitchens, and other atheists emphasize the evil don't in religion's name. But they say virtually nothing about how modern education, science and health care all emerged out of Christianity. Consider the Red Cross, an organization that has done incalculable good to millions across the world. Compare this to the much publicized witch hunts of old New England, in which a total of nineteen people died, or even the Inquisition, responsible for an average of five deaths a year in its four-hundred-fifty-year history.

While some professing Christians have certainly perpetrated injustice in the name of Christ, the numbers pale in comparison to the multimillions slaughtered by the eager disciples of atheists such as Nietzsche and Lenin—including Hitler, Stalin, and Mao.

While hatred of religion motivated Stalin and Mao, Hitler was a utilitarian who used everything at his disposal, including the nominal churches of Germany, to advance his evil agenda. (Many have mistakenly called Hitler a Christian; in fact, he wrote, "I shall never come to terms with the Christian lie... Our epoch will certainly see the end of the disease of Christianity.")

Look around the world at the goodness you see, particularly at the groups and individuals dedicated to helping those who suffer. And then consider: Where are the hospitals and famine-relief organizations founded by atheists? Where are the groups of atheists reaching out to drug addicts, troubled youth, and prisoners?

Matthew Parris wrote in the London *Times* a remarkable 2009 Article titled "As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God." He grew up in Africa and noted the profound difference in the goodness and resistance to evil he saw among Christians in contrast to unbelievers. He concluded, "Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete." [page 123, 124]

28. Woman dying of cancer in a nursing home finds her joy in Jesus.

Thomas Schmidt tells of an old woman he met in a nursing home. Blind and almost deaf, Mabel was eighty-nine. She'd lived there for twenty-five years and now sat strapped in a wheelchair. The cancer eating her face and had pushed her nose to the side, dropped one eye, and distorted her jaw, so she drooled constantly.

Schmidt handed Mabel a flower and said, "Happy Mother's Day." She tried to smell it. "Thank you," she said, her words garbled. "It's lovely. But since I'm blind, can I give it to someone else?" When he wheeled her to another resident, she held out the flower and said, "Here, this if from Jesus."

Schmidt asked, "Mabel, what do you think about when you lie in your room?"
"I think about my Jesus."

“What do you think about Jesus?”

As she spoke slowly and deliberately, he wrote down her words: “I think how good he’s been to me. He’s been awfully good... I’m one of those kind who’s mostly satisfied... I’d rather have Jesus. He’s all the world to me.”

As she spoke and deliberately, he wrote down her words: “I think how good he’s been to me. He’s been awfully good... I’m one of those kind who’s mostly satisfied... I’d rather have Jesus. He’s all the world to me.”

Then Mabel started singing, “Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all. He is my strength from day to day.”

Thinking of this woman bedridden, blind, nearly deaf, cancer eating her for twenty-five years, Schmidt said, “Seconds ticked and minutes crawled, and so did days and weeks and months and years of pain without human company and without an explanation of why it was all happening-and she lay there and sang hymns. *How could she do it?*”

The only good answer to that question, I think, is supernatural. The Jesus Mabel loves is the Jesus who sustains her. [page 124, 125]

29. French church that rescued 2500 Jews during Nazi occupation.

Philip Hallie’s marvelous book *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* tells the true story of *Le Chambon*, a French town where *Pastor Andre Trocme’s* church, under the Nazi occupation, provided Jews with food, shelter, protection, and means of escape. Despite the disapproval of many, Trocme and his church persevered in doing what they believed was right. As a result, “Le Chambon became the safest place for Jews in Europe.” Over a period of about four years, the church rescued nearly twenty-five hundred Jews. [page 127]

CHAPTER 14. The Unbeliever’s Problem of Extreme Evil

30. The evil at Cambodia’s Killing Fields.

I spent hours walking through Cambodia’s Killing Fields. Vek and Samoeun Taing, a gentle Cambodian couple who had survived there with a young child for two years, escorted our small group. Feeling numb, I saw the skulls piled up and stood by the mud pits where killers threw hundreds of bodies. A human jawbone lay at my feet. I picked it up, held it in my hand, and wept.

The darkness felt overwhelming. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge murdered nearly *one-third* of the country’s population. Yet the three million slaughtered in Cambodia amount to less than *one-fiftieth* of the murders by twentieth century tyrants, who killed mostly their own people. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao accounted for most of the carnage, but the ongoing state-sponsored killing in Sudan, including the Darfur region, follows the

same script. (And this figure ignores the staggering number of preborn children aborted throughout the world.)

Samoeun's parents both starved to death. One of her brothers was murdered; they never again heard from another brother. Vek's brother and sister-in-law and six of their children all perished. We stood together at a tree where Khmer Rouge soldiers held children by their little feet, swinging them into the tree to smash their heads. Unthinkable evil! Who could imagine such horrible crimes? [page 132]

CHAPTER 15. Is God's Limited Power a Solution?

31. We do not forgive God but ask for His pardon.

In recent years I have heard even Bible-believing Christians talk about "forgiving God." But what can be forgiven, except moral evil? The one who forgives assumes the moral high ground. Telling God we forgive him accuses him of wrongdoing and implies we are qualified to judge him. This is both blasphemy and silliness.

God is the source of all good and the standard by which good is measured. We may not like what God does, but we are in no position to accuse him of wrongdoing. Every breath he gives us—we who deserve immediate and eternal death—is a gift.

We should ask for God's pardon, not his confession. He owes us no apology; we owe him many. If you're waiting for God to say he's sorry for what he's done to you, don't hold your breath. [page 144]

32. We cannot accept God's love and ignore His power.

God compares himself to both father and mother, and if you are his child, he says his care for you is greater than anyone's. He loves you beyond measure and freely offers forgiveness. God is surely loving, but we dare not attempt to purchase his love at the expense of his power. His attributes are not a menu for us to choose from but are each an essential part of his eternal being.

God's omnipotence and love are not in conflict. Jeremiah 32:17-19 affirms God's love in the midst of a passage not minimizing his power but exalting it: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. *Nothing is too hard for you. you show love to thousands...* O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and might are your deeds."

CHAPTER 16. Is God's Limited Knowledge a Solution?

33. Open theism believes God could not have a purpose and a plan.

The God of historic orthodox Christianity is a God who cares deeply about us, but also has a purpose and plan even for the bad things we encounter. Open theism interprets

this viewpoint as cruel and tries to persuade us we can love God more because he doesn't have a purpose and a plan in our suffering. God may seem more approachable and lovable, but at what expense? His greatness. [page 151]

34. Open theism wrongly believes God lacks knowledge of the future and the present.

Open theists suppose we should find comfort in believing God has not ordained our suffering for eternity past. But open theism's answer to the problem of evil is an illusion. The only way to fully defend God's goodness would be to believe that God not only lacks knowledge of the future, but also of the present. I find it easier to trust a God who has known all along and planned how he will use the tragedy for his glory and our good, than one who just found out about it but chose not to stop it anyways.

Open theism is not only biblically wrong; it's a shallow answer to the problem of evil. [page 151]

35. How God can change His mind in response to repentance.

How do we explain passages such as God promising judgment on Nineveh (see Jonah 3:4), then deciding to withhold judgement when the Ninevites repent (see verse 10)? Wayne Grudem says, "These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God's *present* attitude or intention *with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment*. If the situation changes, then of course God's attitude or expression of intention will also change."

Such change does not indicate an inconsistency in God's being; he remains true to his unchanging nature by responding to repentance differently than he responds to evil. [pages 157]

CHAPTER 17. Is God's Limited Goodness a Solution?

36. God is the greatest good.

God is the Greatest Good and is the source of all lesser goods: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (James 1:17). Wayne Grudem says, "The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval." [page 163]

37. Jonathan's Edwards' sermon on the full enjoyment of God.

Jonathan Edwards said in a 1733 sermon ,
God is the highest food of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun.

These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean. [page 170]

38. George Muller's response to God after the death of his wife.

When George Muller's wife of thirty-nine years died, he preached her funeral sermon for the text "Thou art good, and dost not do good" (Psalm 119:68, KJV).

Muller recounts how he prayed when he discovered she had rheumatic fever: "Yes, my Father, the times of my darling wife are in Thy hands. Thou wilt do the very best thing for her, and for me, whether life or death. If it may be, raise up yet again my precious wife-Thou art able to do it, though she is so ill; but howsoever Thou dealest with me, only help me to continue to be perfectly satisfied with Thy holy will."

When she died, Muller said, "I bow, I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father, I seek by perfect submission to his holy will to glorify him, I kiss continually the hand that has afflicted me... Without an effort my inmost soul habitually joys in the joy of that loved departed one. Her happiness gives joy to me. My dear daughter and I would not have her back, were it possible to produce it by the turn of a hand. God himself has done it; we are satisfied with him." [page 173]

39. Allen Gardiner's journal entries before death focus on the goodness of God.

Sinclair Ferguson tells the story of English missionary Allen Gardiner. In January 1852, a search party found Gardiner's lifeless body. He and his companions had shipwrecked on Tierra del Fuego. Their provisions had run out. They starved to death.

Gardiner, at one point, felt desperate for water; his pangs of thirst, he wrote, were "almost intolerable." Far from home and loved ones, he dies alone, isolated, weakened, and physically broken.

Isn't this one of those stories told to raise the problem of evil and suffering? Indeed, if the story ended like this, we would find it tragic beyond description.

Despite the wretched conditions of his death, Gardiner wrote out Scripture passages, including Psalm 34:10: "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (KJV). Near death, his handwriting feeble, Gardiner managed to write one final entry into his journal: "I am overwhelmed with a sense of goodness of God." [page 175]

CHAPTER 18. God's Limited Love a Solution?

40. Culture and the love of God.

In *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, D.A. Carson writes,

The love of God in our culture has been purged of anything the culture finds uncomfortable. The love of God has been sanitized, democratized, and above all sentimentalized...

It has not only been so. In generations when almost everyone believed in the justice of God, people sometimes found it difficult to believe in the love of God. The reaching of the love of God came as wonderful good news. Nowadays if you tell people that God loves them, they are unlikely to be surprised. [page 181]

41. God’s love does not contradict His holiness or any other attribute.

The God of love is also a God of wrath (see Romans 1:18). Evil angers God. He hates evil, despises it, and will punish it. Yet the God who punishes is the same loving God who chose to bear our punishment in Christ or offer us pardon. If we don’t accept his atoning work, however, we remain subject to eternal punishment. Any affirmation of God’s love that fails to acknowledge the demands of his holiness distorts God’s Character and truth, undermines the gospel.

If in our eyes his holiness contradicts his love and his justice conflicts with his mercy, then that is our problem, not his. The almighty God who created us in the same holy God who condemned us as sinners and the same loving God who went to extraordinary lengths that we might go to Heaven. God’s self-consistency demands the simultaneous and full expression of his holiness, his love, and all his other attributes. [page 183]

42. Christ’s sacrifice is the most compelling proof of God’s love.

The most compelling proof of God’s love is giving his Son to die for us. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

We were all God’s enemies: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” (Colossians 1:21). Even so, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). [page 184]

CHAPTER 20. If You Were the Author, How Would You Have Written the Story?

43. Man heroically lets others be rescued before himself and drowns.

On January 13, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 faced icy weather upon departing Washington, D.C. The Boeing 737 skidded off the runway, slammed into the Fourteenth Street Bridge, and careened into the deathly cold Potomac River. Five passengers clung to the broken-off tailpiece, floating in icy water.

A rescue helicopter dropped a lifeline, pulling up one person. When the second lifeline fell to Arland Williams, forty-six, he quickly passed it on to save another. The third and fourth lifeline came, and again he passed them to others. By the time the fifth and last lifeline dropped, Williams had drowned in the frigid water. Rescuer Gene Windsor wept as he described what William had done: “He could have gone on the first trip, but he put everyone else ahead of himself. Everyone.”

My heart aches for the many families whose loved ones perished in that crash. Yet this act of heroism, as have countless others, enriches us and challenges us to strengthen our own characters so in a similar circumstance we might do the same. [page 198]

CHAPTER 21. Jesus: The Only Answer Bigger Than the Questions

44. Jesus chose to suffer terribly thereby demonstrating God’s love.

Why did Jesus suffer the relentless beatings before the cross? Why did he hang on it for six hours rather than six seconds or six minutes? Perhaps as a reminder that suffering is a process. God does not end our suffering as soon as we would like. He did not end his son’s suffering as soon as he would have liked. We stand in good company.

Spurgeon said, “One short glimpse, one transitory vision of his glory, one brief glance at his marred, but now exalted and beaming countenance, would repay almost a world of trouble.” It’s one thing to suffer terribly, another to *choose* to suffer terribly. Evil and suffering formed the crucible in which God demonstrated his love to mankind.

What is good about “Good Friday”? Why isn’t it called “Bad Friday”? Because out of the appallingly bad came what was inexpressibly good. And the good trumps the bad, because though the bad was temporary, the good is eternal.

God’s love comes to us soaked in divine blood. One look at Jesus-at his incarnation and the redemption he provided us-should silence the argument that God has withdrawn to some far corner of the universe where he keeps his hands clean and maintains his distance from human suffering.

God does not merely empathize with our sufferings. He actually suffers. Jesus is God. What Jesus suffered, God suffered. [page 209]

45. John Stott’s illustration: God suffered just as we do.

John Stott, in *The Cross of Christ*, tells a story about billions of people seated on a great plain before God’s throne. Most shrank back, while some crowded to the front, raising angry voices.

“Can God judge us? How can He know about suffering?” snapped one woman, ripping a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi Concentration camp. “We endured terror...beatings...torture...death!”

Other sufferers expressed their complaints against God for the evil and suffering he had permitted. What did God know of weeping, hunger, and hatred? God leads a sheltered life in Heaven, they said.

Someone from Hiroshima, people born deformed, others murdered, each sent forward a leader. They concluded that before God could judge them, he should be sentenced to live on Earth as a man to endure the suffering they had endured. Then they pronounced a sentence:

Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted. Let his close friends betray him. Let him face false charges. Let a prejudiced jury try him and a cowardly judge convict him. Let him be tortured. Let him be utterly alone. Then, bloody and forsaken, let him die.

The room grew silent after the sentence against God had been pronounced. No one moved, and a weight fell on each face.

For suddenly, all knew that God already had served his sentence. [page 214]

46. Stott's comparison of the suffering God to Buddha.

I agree with John Stott:

I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings became more manageable in light of his. [page 217]

47. God intends evil for good in Christ's death and in the deaths of others.

Peter, speaking to a Jerusalem crowd, said of Christ, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23).

If God planned Christ's death, do others die according to his plan? Does the God who had purpose in the death of his Son also have purpose, even though a different one, in the deaths of his other children? Does the same God who intended evil for good in the life of Joseph intend evil for good in the life of other believers? Romans 8:28 suggests the answer is yes. [page 227]

48. John Wesley's recognition of God's sovereign control.

A distraught man frantically rode his horse up to John Wesley, shouting, "Mr. Wesley, Mr. Wesley, something terrible has happened. Your house has burned to the ground!" Weighing the news for a moment, Wesley replied, "No. The Lord's house burned to the ground. That means one less responsibility for me."

Wesley did not give a sanctimonious or clever response; I think he recognized not only God's ownership but his sovereign control. We might say, "Get real," but his reaction didn't deny reality. Rather, it affirmed the reality that God owns everything and reigns over all. (Of course, his response to the death of a loved one would have reflected far greater trauma, despite his belief in God's sovereignty.) [page 228]

49. God clearly and repeatedly affirms and assumes his sovereignty over all.

Many verses make clear that though God's creatures can oppose him, they cannot ultimately prevail. For example:

I make known the end from the beginning,
From ancient times, what is still to come.
I say: My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please. (Isaiah 46:10)

All the peoples of the earth
are regarded as nothing.
He does as he pleases
with the powers of heaven
and the people of the earth.
No one can hold back his hand
or say to him: "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35)

That he does what pleases him does not mean that all that happens pleases him. Yet the following passages emphasize God's sovereignty in this broken world.

God gives and withholds children. Many couples struggle with infertility, but the Bible consistently ascribes this problem to God. It's said of Hannah "the LORD had closed her womb" (1 Samuel 1:5). God opened Leah's womb (see Genesis 29:31). Sarah said, "The LORD has kept me from having children" (Genesis 16:2). Samson's mother and John the Baptist's mother both had children by God's intervention (see Judges 13:3; Luke 1:13). God oversees the conception of children and works directly to shape the children: "[God] knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13).

God sends poverty and wealth. First Samuel 2:7-8 says, "The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap."

God grants limited and conditional power to people, but he, the power-dispenser, still maintains control. Pilate arrogantly said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:10-11).

God determines the time and places people will live. Acts 17:25-26 says God "gives all men life and breath and everything else" and that "from one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set from them and the exact places where they should live." [pages 230, 231]

50. God's sovereignty is comforting to His children.

Spurgeon wrote, "There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the doctrine of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings." [page 235]

51. Theologian Benjamin B. Warfield's story.

Benjamin B. Warfield, world-renowned theologian, taught at Princeton Seminary for thirty-four years until his death in 1921. Students still read his books today. Few people know his story, that in 1876, at age twenty-five, he married Annie Kinkead. They traveled to Germany for their honeymoon. In an intense storm, lightning struck Annie and permanently paralyzed her. After Warfield cared for her for thirty-nine years, she died in 1915. Because of her extreme needs, Warfield seldom left his home for more than two hours at a time during all those years of marriage.

Imagine your marriage beginning like this on your honeymoon. Imagine how it might affect your worldview. So what did this theologian with shattered dreams have to say about Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"?

The fundamental thought is universal government of God. All that comes to you is under His controlling hand. The secondary thought is the favour of God to those that love Him. If He governs all, then nothing but good can befall those to whom He would do good... Though we are too only groan in unformed longings, He is the author in us of these very longings... and He will so govern all things that we shall reap only good from all that befalls us. [page 235,236]

CHAPTER 23. "Free Will" and Meaningful Choice

52. Professor who stood between the gunman and his students at Virginia Tech.

Liviu Librescu was a seventy-six-year-old professor of aerospace engineering at Virginia Tech. On April 16, 2007, when a murderous gunman tried to enter his classroom, Liviu managed to barricade the door, blocking the shooter's entrance. He held his ground long enough to give all but one of his twenty students time to escape out the window. The killer shot Librescu five times. The final shot to the head killing him.

A Holocaust survivor, Librescu made his choice to stand between a mass murderer and his students, and give his life for them, doing so on, of all days, Holocaust Remembrance Day. [page 238]

53. Definition of free will.

Jonathan Edwards defined free will as "the ability to choose as one pleases." He explained, "A man never, in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will."

In that sense, a sinner has free will, but given his sinful nature, he is not free to desire righteousness or live righteously without God's empowerment.

I believe in free will if it means the ability to make voluntary choices that have real effects. I do not believe in free will if it means what evangelist Charles Finney said: "Free-will implies the power of originating and deciding our own choices, and of exercising our own sovereignty, in every instance of choice upon moral questions of deciding or choosing in conformity with duty or otherwise in all cases of moral obligation." This gives more credit to the human condition than Scripture does.

Since I've engaged in discussions and read books where these and other definitions of *free will* are assumed without being stated, I've seen how confusing it can get. Before the argument starts, be sure to define terms. [page 242, 243]

54. God in His sovereignty allows no action against you that is in not accordance with His purpose.

Jerry Bridges writes,

If God is truly sovereign, if He truly loves you, and the teaching of Scripture is correct, then God will never allow any action against you that is not in accord with His ultimate purpose to work for your good. If the evil done against you is fresh and haunting, then I know my words may seem terrible calloused. But I say them because I believe they are true. Scripture teaches them, and one day we will all believe them, when we are with Him. [page 275]

55. Our responsibility for our own evil.

Wayne Grudem states, "However we understand God's relationship to evil, we must *never* come to the point where we think that we are not responsible for the evil that we do, or that God takes pleasure in evil or is to be blamed for it. Such a conclusion is clearly contrary to Scripture." [page 276]

56. Charles Spurgeon's views on sovereignty.

Non-Calvinists opposed Charles Spurgeon because of his understanding of God's sovereignty. Hyper-Calvinists opposed him because his public invitations to respond to the gospel affirmed meaningful human choice and responsibility. Spurgeon reminded us that no theological system is authoritative, but Scripture alone:

My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the word of God.

The Bible is God-breathed, theological systems aren't. They are valid *not* to the extent that they are self-consistent, but to the degree they are consistent with Scripture. Spurgeon didn't try to reconcile the paradoxical doctrines we've looked at for five chapters. He said,

That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, *that is true*; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, *that is true*; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind

that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

Spurgeon warned against theologies that attempt to reconcile, by means of shortsighted human logic, every apparent biblical inconsistency: “Men who are morbidly anxious to possess a self-consistent creed—a creed which they can put together, and form into a square, like a Chinese puzzle—are very apt to narrow their souls... Those who will only believe what they can reconcile with necessarily disbelieve much of Divine revelation.” [page 277, 278]

57. The system of truth is not one straight line but two.

When Scripture teaches apparently contradictory ideas, we should embrace both. Spurgeon said, “The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once.”

CHAPTER 29. Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers

58. Hell exists precisely because God has committed himself to solving the problem of evil.

Hell is not evil; it's a place where evil gets punished. Hell is not pleasant, appealing, or encouraging. But Hell is morally good, because a good God must punish evil.

Hell will not be a blot on the universe, but an eternal testimony to the ugliness of evil that will prompt wondrous appreciation of a good God's magnificence. That sounds like nonsense to hell-hating moderns, but it makes perfect sense when we recognize and hate evil for what it is. We each have our preferred ways of sinning, whether as prostitutes, porn addicts, materialists, gossips, or the self-righteous. We all are sinners who deserve Hell.

We hate Hell precisely because we don't hate evil. We hate it also because we deserve it.

We cry out for true and lasting justice, then fault God for taking evil too seriously by administering eternal punishment. We can't have it both ways. Sin is evil; just punishment of sin is good. Hell is an eternal correction of and compensation for evil. It is justice. To fear and dread Hell is understandable, but to argue against Hell is to argue against justice. [page 309]

59. Jesus Himself affirms the existence of Hell.

It isn't just what Jesus said about Hell that matters. It is the fact that it was he who said it.

“There seems to be a kind of conspiracy,” wrote Dorothy Sayers, “to forget, or to conceal, where the doctrine of hell comes from. The doctrine of hell is not ‘mediaeval priestcraft’ for frightening people into giving money to the church: it is Christ’s deliberate judgment on sin... We cannot repudiate hell without altogether repudiating Christ.”

Why do I believe in an eternal Hell? Because Jesus clearly and repeatedly affirmed its existence. As Sayers suggested, you cannot dismiss Hell without dismissing Jesus. [page 310, 311]

60. Problems with the annihilationist position.

One popular annihilationist position maintains that unbelievers cease to exist when they die. But if they no longer exist, then how can they be raised to stand at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20? Would God re-create them to stand before him in judgment? After this judgment, Revelation 20 says they will be cast into the lake of fire. Would this be a second annihilation?

61. Many see Hell as the ultimate cruelty and injustice.

Jesus said God prepared Hell “for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). Humans go there only as they align themselves with that cosmic minority of fallen angels who reject God.

Clark Pinnock writes, “I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine... How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God.”

It’s hard to imagine a more serious accusation, since Jesus, the second member of the triune God, makes the clearest statements in Scripture about everlasting punishment. Can any Christian really believe that in doing so Jesus was saying God is “cruel” and “like Satan”?

Many atheists believe early Christians invented Hell as a doctrine to frighten people into conversion. But Christ’s followers merely repeated their Lord’s teaching. They didn’t make them up. [page 315]

62. Sinful rebellion may continue in Hell.

D.A. Carson argues that rebellion may continue eternally in Hell, and if so, then Hell is eternal precisely because the sinful rebellion is eternal. Hell would then be a place where “sinners go on sinning and receiving the recompense of their sin, refusing, always refusing, to bend the knee.” Hell would be ever-ongoing punishment for ever-ongoing sins. [page 318]

63. Suffering can be a foretaste of Hell.

For the Hell-bound, suffering can serve as a frightening foretaste of Hell. Suffering reminds us of our imminent death, the wages for our sin. In our suffering we should look at our own evils and failures and beg God for mercy.

Spurgeon said, “If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay... If hell much be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned or unprayed for.” [page 321]

CHAPTER 30. Why Doesn't God Do More to Restrain Evil and Suffering?

64. What has kept evil from destroying the world?

Why does the chaos that breaks out in some corner of the world always prove the exception rather than the rule? Why haven't tyrants, with access to powerful weapons, destroyed this planet? What has kept infectious diseases and natural disasters from killing 99 percent of the world's population rather than less than 1 percent? [page 327]

65. Whenever God has given a culture over to their sins, they have ceased to exist.

If God permitted people to follow their every evil inclination all the time, life on this planet would screech to a halt. Sometimes God permits evil by giving people over to their sins (see Romans 1:24-32), and this itself leads to the deterioration and ultimate death of an evil culture, which is a mercy to surrounding cultures. The most morally corrupt ancient cultures no longer exist. [page 327]

66. The miracle on the Hudson River.

Fatal car and airplane accidents bring awful devastation, but statistically these are rare. On January 15, 2009, what should have brought certain death to passengers aboard Flight 1549, and catastrophe to Manhattan, turned into what secular reporters labeled a “miracle.” The pilot, Chesley Sullenberger, safely landed a crippled plane in New York's Hudson River, with no serious injuries.

While chunks of ice and busy ferries filled most of the river, the place where the plane came down remained clear of both ice and boats. It landed without breaking apart. Ferryboat captains rescued all 155 people from the frigid river within minutes. The *New York Times* suggested “more than luck” brought the plane down mere minutes from experts trained in water rescues. Passengers who said they hadn't believed in God nevertheless prayed to him on the plane, then publicly thanked him for sparing their lives. [page 328]

67. Hotel or prison, depending on your view.

C. S. Lewis wrote,

Imagine a set of people all living in the same building. Half of them think it is a hotel, the other half think it is prison. Those who think it is a hotel might regard it as quite intolerable, and those who thought it was a prison might decide that it was really surprisingly comfortable. So that what seems the ugly doctrine is one that comforts and strengthens you in the end. The people who try to hold an optimistic view of this world would become pessimists: the people who hold a pretty stern view of it become optimistic. [page 330]

68. All sin deserves punishment; one is not more guilty than another.

Dorothy Sayers wrote,

“Why doesn’t God smite this dictator dead?” is a question a little remote from us. Why, madam, did he not strike you dumb and imbecile before you uttered that baseless and unkind slander the day before yesterday? Or me, before I behaved with such a cruel lack of consideration to that well-meaning friend? And why sir, did he not cause your hand to rot off at the wrist before you signed your name to that dirty bit of financial trickery? You did not quite mean that? But why not? Your misdeeds and mine are none the less repellent because our opportunities for doing damage are less spectacular than those of some other people. Do you suggest that your doings and mine are too trivial for God to bother about? That cuts both ways; for in that case, it would make precious little difference to his creation if he wiped us both out tomorrow. [page 331]

69. Every evil is a capital crime.

Do you believe the world would be a better place if people immediately paid the just penalty for every sin? In God’s sight, every evil is a capital crime (see Romans 6:23). The woman who tells a “little white lie,” the teenager who shoplifts, the greedy man, the gossip, all would instantly die. D. A. Carson writes, “Do you really want nothing but totally effective, instantaneous justice? Then go to hell.” [page 332]

70. We do not need to wait until God ends suffering to enter His presence.

Thankfully, while the Messiah may not return to Earth as soon as we’d like, he promises, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). So while we long for and pray for God to send the Messiah to bring an end to this age of evil and suffering, we need not wait until then to enter his presence.

In light of the work done by Christ, our sympathetic high priest, we’re told, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Until God sends the Messiah to rescue the world, or he rescues us through our deaths, may we approach his throne confidently, seeking his fellowship, comfort, mercy, and grace in our time of need... today, this very hour. [page 333]

CHAPTER 31. Why Does God Delay Justice?

71. The delay of reward and retribution never exceeds a life span.

God's is not a vending-machine justice in which a coin of righteousness immediately produces reward or a coin of evil yields swift retribution. Packaged theologies seek to neatly account for everything, but as Job, Psalms, and the prophets repeatedly demonstrate. That's not how life works.

Yet God doesn't delay justice for as long as we often imagine. The wheels of justice may seem to turn slowly, but they turn surely. Some rewards of goodness and punishments of evil come in this life. And though ultimate rewards and punishments await the final judgment, considerable justice, both reward and retribution, gets dispensed upon death, when God's children immediately experience the joy of his presence and the unrepentant suffer the first justice of Hell (see Luke 16:19-31). This means that the maximum duration of injustice experienced by any person cannot exceed his life span.

How long is a life span? Remarkably short. David says, "You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath" (Psalm 39:5). [page 335]

CHAPTER 32. Why Doesn't God Explain His Reasons?

72. Surrender to God instead of demanding a reason.

Charles Spurgeon stated, "He who demands a reason from God is not in a fit state to receive one." It is when Job surrenders himself to God that he at last, at the end of himself, finds comfort. [page 344]

73. When faced with adversity, we may ask hard questions but never turn from God.

D.A. Carson puts it this way in *How Long, O Lord?*: "This is, at the end of the day, the ultimate test of our knowledge of God. Is it robust enough that, when faced with excruciating adversity, it may prompt us to lash out with hard questions, but will never permit us to turn away from God?" [page 345]

74. God used the suffering of a terrible childhood to show Himself to others.

My dad raped me from age three to nine. He also raped my older sisters. Horrible, disgusting and repugnant. I had nightmares as a child, and into adulthood. But I also had two things God gave me during those times. One was a vivid picture of me lying in

the palm of God's hand, where I slept peacefully. Another was of someone placing a star blanket over me as I slept, covering me in safety. This was early elementary age.

I always remember that time of my life because even while the molestation happened, I knew God allowed it, but walked with me through it. I grew in an intimacy with God that is supernatural. It isn't about my own spirituality. But I have always pictured myself sitting securely in God's lap. I haven't ever struggled with why He allowed it. Statistics indicate a high percentage of abused kids have trouble relating to God as their Father. Not me.

When I was in seventh grade, I prayed and asked God to use the garbage of my childhood to bring glory to Him. That was a GOD prayer...beyond my own vision. I can't count how many people I have been able to encourage who have similar backgrounds as mine. He has answered that prayer many times over. I became able to call on God right in the middle of dreams that used to scare me, and He would put His mighty arm between me and the danger.

He has used my dark times for His glory and my blessing. He is such a personal God, isn't He? And I don't understand why He chose to reveal Himself to me so personally, but He did and still does. It is as if He cracks the door to Heaven open for me here on earth, letting me know that He loves me and watches over me.

Pain and suffering is not garbage when God used it to show Himself through it. [page 346]

75. Our sight is not good enough to see God's reasons for suffering and evil.

We might assume God should make the reasons for suffering and evil easier to see than a no-see-um. But perhaps the reasons would be obvious to a sinless clear-sighted person. Maybe it's not that the reasons are invisible, but that we have a serious vision problem.

Spurgeon said,

Providence is wonderfully intricate. Ah! you want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I assure you. You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you; you must believe it. You want to see how it can bring good to the soul; you must believe it. Honor God by trusting him. [page 351]

76. God uses the suffering of Christians to bring others to Him; Steve Saint's story.

As a child, Steve Saint thought of Timbuktu as a made-up name for “the ends of the earth.” In 1986, while traveling in western Africa for missionary Aviation Fellowship, he found himself stranded in the real Timbuktu.

Steve decided to rent a truck to travel elsewhere, despite warnings that if it broke down, he wouldn't survive in the Sahara Desert. Men armed with scimitars and knives watched him suspiciously. After he failed to find a truck, Steve's thoughts ran to his father, Nate Saint, a former missionary in Ecuador. When Steve was only five, natives speared to death his dad and four other missionaries. Now, thirty years later, Steve found himself questioning his father's death. “I couldn't help but think the murders were capricious, an accident of bad timing.”

Steve asked for directions to a church. Some children led him to a tiny mudbrick house with a poster on the wall showing wounded hands covering a cross. A dark-skinned man in flowing robes approached and introduced himself as Nouh Af Infa Yatara.

Steve asked Nouh, through a translator, how he came to faith in Christ. Nouh said he had stolen vegetables from a missionary's garden. The missionary gave him the vegetables and promised him an ink pen if he memorized some verses from the Bible. Nouh believed the verses he learned and came to Christ. Nouh's parents threw him out of the home and pulled him out of school. Nouh's mother even put a sorcerer's poison in Nouh's food at a family feast. Nouh ate the food but suffered no ill effects.

Steve asked Nouh, “Why is your faith so important to you that you're willing to give up everything, even your life?”

“I know God loves me and I'll live with him forever.”

“Where did your courage come from?” Steve asked.

“The missionary gave me books about Christians who'd suffered for their faith. My favorite was about five young men who risked their lives to take God's good news to stone-age Indians in the jungles of South American. The book said they let themselves be speared to death, even though they had guns and could have killed their attackers!”

Stunned at these words, Steve said, “One of those men was my father.”

“Your father?” Now Nouh felt stunned.

Steve assured Nouh of the truth of the story. And then Nouh assured Steve that God had used his father's death, many years later, to help a young Muslim-turned-Christian hold on to his faith. Steve realized that if God could plan the death of his own Son, he

could also plan and use the death of Steve's dad, Nate Saint, to accomplish his sovereign purpose-including reaching one young Muslim for Christ and orchestrating this God-ordained meeting of two men at the ends of the earth.

Stories like this don't apply only to the deaths of missionary martyrs. Over time, God has brought countless people to Christ through the lives and deaths of ordinary housewives, common laborers, farmers, factory workers, business people, teachers, and schoolchildren. [page 400,401]

CHAPTER 38. How God Uses Suffering for Our Sanctification

77. War destroys man's optimism about human nature.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote in 1939, as the Holocaust was in its early stages,

God permits war in order that men may see through it, more clearly than they have ever done before, what sin really is. In time of peace we tend to think lightly of sin, and to hold optimistic views of human nature. War reveals man and the possibility within man's nature. The First World War shattered the optimistic view of man which had held sway for so many years, and revealed something of the essential sinfulness of human nature... It forces us to examine the very foundations of life. It makes us face the direct questions as to what it is in human nature that leads to such calamities. [page 405]

CHAPTER 39. How God Uses Suffering to Build Our Character

78. Expressing gratitude makes a grateful heart.

Puritan pastor Richard Baxter wrote, "Resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. If you cannot do it with the joy that you should, yet do it as you can... Doing it as you can is the way to be able to do it better. Thanksgiving stirreth up thankfulness in the heart."

Baxter is right-expressing gratitude makes a grateful heart. Children who learn to say thanks become more thankful. Gratitude is a wonderful perspective shaping habit. [page 413,414]

79. The first Thanksgiving introduced by President Abraham Lincoln.

During the Civil War, in a time of great national suffering, Abraham Lincoln called upon the nation to come to God in thanksgiving. He wrote,

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity... peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict.

Lincoln pointed out that farming, textiles, shipping, lumber, and other aspects of the economy were flourishing, and iron, coal, and precious metals “have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore.” He encouraged people to thank God that, despite the casualties, the population increased due to childbirth. He said to rejoice in the nation’s strength and the promise of increased freedom. “No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”

Hence, Lincoln continued, “It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people.” So he called upon the nation “to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

How remarkable that the annual celebration of Thanksgiving began in the middle of what was arguably the most terrible period in all of the nation’s history! Even in those darkest days, Lincoln could point to many reasons to thank God for his goodness and grace. [page 414,415]

80. Corrie ten Boom learned to give thanks even in a concentration camp.

Though a providential clerical error finally won Corrie ten Boom’s release, her father, sister, brother, and nephew all died in concentration camps. “I knew again,” she said, “that in darkness God’s truth shines most clear.”

Corrie’s sister, Betsie, in light of the command “Give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18), insisted they should thank God even for the fleas and lice in their barracks. Corrie resisted until she realized that the fleas and lice made it possible for her to open the Bible and reach it unhindered to other prisoners. Guards could have confiscated her forbidden Bible, but they refused to enter because of the vermin.

“Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he had done” (Psalm 105:1)[page 415]

81. Many of God’s richest blessings come from sickness and affliction.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “I venture to say that the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the possible exception of sickness... If some men

that I know of could only be favored with a month of rheumatism, it would, by God's grace, mellow them marvelously."

Though he sought to avoid suffering, Spurgeon said, "I am afraid that all the grace that I have got of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But that good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable... Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library." [page 416]

82. God uses suffering to bring us to the end of ourselves and back to Christ.

Richard Baxter wrote, "Suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the Word hath easier entrance." God uses suffering to bring us to the end of ourselves and back to Christ. And that is worth any cost. [page 417]

83. Don't ask for suffering to be removed; ask to become Christlike.

David and Nancy Guthrie told me, "It troubles us that the church's one response to suffering is to pray that it will be taken away. Nobody's first prayer is 'Use this to help us become Christlike.'"

Paul, in contrast, wrote, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and he fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, *because like him in his death*, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11). God uses suffering as an instrument to make us better. [page 420]

84. Avoiding challenges makes us shallow and lacking in character.

Let's be honest: virtually everyone who has suffered little in life is shallow, unmotivated, self-absorbed, and lacking in character. You know it and so do I. And yet we do everything we can to avoid challenges, both to our children and to ourselves. If we succeed in our avoidance, we'll develop in ourselves and our children the sort of character we least admire.

God's parenting method doesn't shield us from adversity and the character it builds. We would do well to learn from him. [page 422]

CHAPTER 40. Suffering Can Give Birth to Joy, Compassion, and Hope

85. Suffering causes us to worship and brings inexplicable joy.

Christian slaves in nineteenth-century America sometimes were forbidden to sing. So when they went to the river for their chores, they would hang wet blankets around themselves, then fill water pots and sing into them to absorb the sound. They couldn't hold inside their songs of praise. The slave songs reflected deep sorrow and deep joy at the same time. [page 426]

86. We may not know until eternity how our suffering has brought comfort to others.

That we've come through suffering may comfort those who don't know us; indeed, it may help someone long after we've died. After I posted a blog about Charles Spurgeon and Martin Luther and the suffering they endured, I received this note: "Wow. I was depressed because once again I was not feeling well. It's amazing to realize these great leaders suffered so much. It gives me hope, as I suffer from near constant pain. Thanks. This really encouraged me-I need it!"

Would Luther or Spurgeon have guessed that centuries later their suffering would be a source of comfort to God's people? Who is being, and will be, touched by your suffering that you won't know about until eternity? [433]

CHAPTER 41. How God Uses Our Suffering for the Good of Others

87. Don't bear trouble, use it. Turn it into testimony.

E. Stanley Jones wrote, "Don't bear trouble, use it. Take whatever happens-justice and injustice, pleasure and pain, compliment and criticism-take it up into the purpose of your life and make something out of it. Turn it into testimony."

Paul said, "It was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you" (Galatians 4:13). Some think this means that he changed his itinerary to recuperate in Galatia. But whatever the case, God specifically used Paul's illness to give him a new sphere of influence that brought the gospel to Galatia. [page 438]

88. Suffering gives us a way to credibly demonstrate the love of Christ.

Larry Waters says, "How the believer deals with undeserved suffering may be the primary witness of God's goodness, justice, grace and love not only to the sufferer, but to a nonbelieving world."

When an African named Joseph heard about Jesus in a roadside conversation, he turned to him as his Savior. Filled with excitement and joy, he went door to door, telling his whole village about Jesus. To his amazement, his neighbors became violent. They beat him with strands of barbed wire and left him to die in the bush.

After days of passing in and out of consciousness, Joseph found the strength to get up. He decided he must have left something out of the good news or surely they wouldn't have rejected it. After rehearsing the message, Joseph limped back to the circle of huts and proclaimed Jesus.

Again they beat him, reopening his wounds. Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scarred-and determined to go back.

This time, they attacked him even before he opened his mouth. As they flogged him, he spoke to them of Jesus. Before he passed out, he saw some of his female assailants begin to weep. When Joseph awoke, the ones who had so severely beaten him were trying to save his life and nurse him back to health. While he lay unconscious, the entire village had come to Christ. [page 439, 440]

89. Maybe God doesn't want things to be the same.

Joni Eareckson Tada spoke of a woman, pregnant with a disabled child, who cried out in desperation to her husband, "Things will never be the same." His response? "Maybe God doesn't *want* them to be the same." [page 440]

90. Hardship and suffering have inspired powerful songs that have touched countless lives.

Joseph Scriven wrote "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" after his fiancée drowned. George Matheson wrote "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" after his fiancée rejected him because he was going blind.

Horatio Spafford, a prosperous lawyer, real estate investor, and devout Presbyterian elder, lived comfortably in Chicago with his wife, Anna, and their four young daughters. Knowing that his friend D. L. Moody would preach in England in 1873, Spafford's family decided to vacation in Europe. Last-minute business detained Horatio, so Anna and the girls sailed on the ocean liner *S.S. Ville du Havre*. En route, a British vessel rammed the ship, and it sank within minutes. Rescuers picked up an unconscious Anna on a floating spar, but all four daughters drowned. When Anna arrived in England, she sent a telegram to Horatio with the words, "Saved alone."

Horatio immediately left Chicago to bring his wife home. On the Atlantic crossing, the captain called Horatio to his cabin to tell him that they had nearly reached the spot where his four daughters had perished. As he passed over their watery grave, Spafford wrote a hymn of profound depth that has touched millions: "It Is Well with My Soul." [page 441, 442]

91. God has used suffering in the lives of missionaries and reformers.

To put your suffering in perspective, read the biographies of missionaries and reformers, of people such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Carey, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Harriet Tubman, William Wilberforce, Hudson Taylor, and countless others. You'll find the pages riddled with suffering, all of which God used to build their characters and expand their ministries. Rather than depressing us, these stories inspire and challenge us to say no to time-wasting trivia, seize the day and invest it in what matters. As Robert Moffat said, "We have all eternity to celebrate our victories, but only one short hour before sunset in which to win them." [page 444]

92. Paton's sufferings and success.

As a successful young Scottish preacher, Paton determined to leave Glasgow to minister to this unreached people group. But most of his Christian friends urged him to do something more sensible with his life. Paton wrote,

Amongst many who sought to deter me, was one dear old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument always was, "The Cannibals! You will be eaten by Cannibals!" At last I replied, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.

Paton suffered much in his forty-three years in the New Hebrides, where he buried his wife and child, and endured grave illnesses, shipwrecks, the betrayal of friends and some converts, and grief over martyred co-workers. On the other hand, John Paton lived to see Christ transform an entire culture, and to witness hundreds of missionaries follow behind him.

When he died, Paton could anticipate hearing words that would compensate for every evil and suffering he endured, words spoken by Jesus in Matthew 25:21: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" [page 445]

CHAPTER 42. Finding God in Suffering

93. Trials send us back to God and His Word.

Years ago I turned off talk radio when I drive, to listen to the Bible instead. Scripture on audio accompanies me as I travel. I never regret investing my time this way-why listen to one more human voice when you can listen to God's? it prepares me to face whatever lies ahead. "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

J. C. Ryle wrote,

There is nothing which shows our ignorance so much as our impatience under trouble. We forge that every cross is a message from God, and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think-to wean us from the world-to send us to the Bible-to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing but sickness is far better if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy; but adversity is a greater one if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness and dying in sin. [page 451, 452]

94. Through Job's story, God offers paradigm-shifting insights to face suffering.

Job has taught me many valuable lessons, including these:

- Life is not predictable or formulaic.
- Most of life's expectations and suffering's explanations are simplistic and naïve, waiting to be toppled.
- When the day of crisis comes, we should pour out our hearts to God, who can handle our grief and even our anger.
- We should not turn from God and internalize our anger, allowing it to become bitterness.
- We should weigh and measure the words of friends, authors, teachers, and counselors, finding whatever truth they might speak without embracing their errors or getting derailed by their insensitivities.
- We should not insist on taking control by demanding a rational explanation from the evils and suffering that befall us.
- We should look to God and ask him to reveal himself to us; in contemplating his greatness will come to see him as the Answer above all answers.
- We should trust that God is working behind the scenes and that our suffering has hidden purpose that one day, even if not in this life we will see.
- We should cry out to Jesus, the mediator and friend whom Job could only glimpse, but who indwells us by grace. [page 455, 456]

CHAPTER 43. Finding Help in Dark Times

95. Even though he suffered much, Matthew Henry was happy Christian.

Puritan Matthew Henry, who knew considerable suffering, embraced a theology that made its way to his heart. Henry was said to have “possessed the desirable disposition and power of looking on the bright side of everything... There was a loveliness in his spirit and a gladness in his heart, which caused others to feel ‘how happy a thing it must be to be a Christian.’... This cheerfulness pervaded his entire life. One reason of the great power of his life over many who were not religious men, lay in the constancy of that happy spirit which they saw and coveted.” [page 463]

96. Peace during affliction.

Great peace comes in meditating on the attributes of our God and his care for us. Spurgeon said, “It would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me, that the bitter cup was never filled by his hand, that my trials were never measured out by him, nor sent to me by his arrangement of their weight and quantity.” [page 464]

97. Looking at Christ's suffering puts our own into perspective.

God's people have always put their own suffering in perspective by looking at Christ's. Martin Luther said, "When I consider my crosses, tribulations, and temptations, I shame myself almost to death, thinking what they are in comparison of the sufferings of my blessed Savior Christ Jesus." [page 466]

CHAPTER 44. Finding Grace to Ease Others' Suffering and to Endure Our Own

98. God's truths are like tools; use the right tool for what is needed.

Darrell Scott told me that after his daughter Rachel was murdered at Columbine, people often quoted Romans 8:28 to him. He wasn't ready to hear it. How sad that such a powerful verse, cited carelessly or prematurely, becomes a source of pain when it should offer great comfort. Think of God's truths like tools. Don't use a hammer when you need a wrench. And don't use either when you need to give someone a hug, a blanket, or a meal-or just weep with them.

On the other hand, Nancy Guthrie says sufferers should extend grace to the insensitive comforters who hurt them. The last thing a grieving person needs is to take on the burden of resentment. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). [page 471]

99. Recognizing that suffering has meaning helps us learn not to waste it.

Shortly after speaking together at a conference on suffering, John Piper and David Powlison both learned they had cancer. They formulated ten points under the exhortation, "Don't waste your cancer." They said, "You will waste your cancer if you

1. Do not believe it is designed for you by God
2. Believe it is a curse and not a gift
3. Seek comfort from your odds rather than from God
4. Refuse to think about death
5. Think that "beating" cancer means staying alive rather than cherishing Christ
6. Spend too much time reading about cancer and not enough time reading about God
7. Let it drive you into solitude instead of deepen your relationship with manifest affection
8. Grieve as those who have no hope
9. Treat sin as casually as before
10. Fail to use it as a means of witness to the truth and glory of Christ." [page 474, 475]