



AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

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DOES GOD FEEL OUR PAIN?

An AIIA Quote Forum

One Sunday morning during my eight-month hospitalization with Guillain-Barré syndrome in 1984-85 they offered to take me to the hospital chapel service. I was in ICU at the time, extensively paralyzed and unable to even breathe on my own. Somehow they got me into a high-backed wheelchair and disconnected from the mechanical respirator. Nurse Julie accompanied me, periodically pumping air into my lungs from an ambu bag as we slowly proceeded to the little chapel on Second Floor. I don't remember what the sermon was about that morning. I don't recall the name of the chaplain. What I do clearly recollect is the long, loud, rhythmic, exhaling whine of the ambu bag every time that I was given a breath. I also remember feeling uncomfortable, anxious, and an increasing desire to get back to my bed. That's about all that I remember — until the service reached its closing hymn. Then, suddenly, I recall being totally overwhelmed with emotion as the group began singing, "Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and song; As the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the way grows weary and long?" As a minister, I had led my congregations in that song for years. But never did the words of Frank Graeff's hymn connect with me as they did that Sunday morning at

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Eastern Maine Medical Center. Hot tears coursed down my cheeks and onto my hospital johnny as I listened to them sing the refrain: "O yes, He cares— I know He cares! His heart is touched with my grief; When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares. He cares." Those simple lyrics responded to the very core of the issue with which I had been struggling for weeks, and the truth they conveyed was far more therapeutic than all the medicine in the place. —Daryl E. Witmer

"But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." —Hebrews 2:9-10, NASB

"The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak; They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne; But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak, And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone." —Edward Shillito in the poem *Jesus of the Scars*

"Frequently it is when we are crushed and devastated that the cross speaks most powerfully to us. The wounds of Christ then become Christ's credentials. The world mocks, but we are assured of God's love by Christ's wounds." — D. A. Carson in *How Long, O Lord?*



is a place of transaction. It is the place where power happens

"By itself suffering does no good. But when we see it as the thing *between* God and us, it has meaning. Wedged in the crux—the cross—suffering becomes a transaction. The cross

between God and us." —Joni Eareckson Tada in *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty*

No one has suffered more than our Father in heaven. No one has paid more dearly for the allowance of sin into the world. No one has so continuously grieved over the pain of a race gone bad. No one has suffered like the One who paid for our sin in the crucified body of His own Son. No one has suffered more than the One who, when He stretched out His arms and died, showed us how much He loved us. It is this God who, in drawing us to Himself, asks us to trust Him when we are suffering and when our own loved ones cry out in our presence (I Peter 2:21; 3:18; 4:1). —RBC's *Our Daily Bread*

"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 the 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 had to look away. And in imagination I have turned instead to the 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 become more manageable in the light of His. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering." —John R.W. Stott, in *The Cross of Christ*, © 1986, IVP

"For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." —Hebrews 2:18, NASB