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CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

WHY SUFFERING?

Answers to one of life's
most troubling questions

HEAVEN'S HEALING BALM

The one sure cure
for heartbreak

MY BEST FRIEND

A survivor's story

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Personally speaking

Most people try not to think about it more than they have to, but there's no denying it: There's a lot of suffering in the world. Innocents are killed, maimed, and made homeless in cruel and unjust wars. More suffer the same in natural and manmade disasters. Cancer, AIDS, and other diseases claim millions of lives each year, often after months or years of pain. There's no end to it. Why does life have to be this way? It's the age-old question: Why does God—if there *is* a God—allow suffering?

There is no simple, universal answer to that. There *is* a God and He *does* allow suffering, but His reasons and purposes are nearly as numerous and varied as the sufferers themselves. One thing is certain, however: How people come through suffering or react to the suffering of others depends largely on their faith. Those who have no faith usually go down in despair, but those who have implicit faith in a just and loving God call out to Him in their time of need, tap into His infinite resources, and find the grace and strength to rise above their pain and loss.

Little is known about the personal suffering of Frank E. Graeff (1860-1919), but he must have been writing from experience when he penned his now famous hymn, "Does Jesus Care?" The pain he expresses is too real to have been mere fabrication, and only one who has been there could express the truth and hope found in the refrain so victoriously. "Oh yes, He cares, I *know* He cares, His heart is touched with my grief. ... I know my Savior cares!"

Suffering is part of life, but that wonderful faith and assurance can be yours too. I hope this issue of *Activated* will help you connect with God's love and comfort when you need Him most.

Keith Phillips

For the *Activated* Family

GOD IS LOVE

A DEADLY COALMINE EXPLOSION in Northern England left scores of miners trapped underground, beyond help. The large crowd that gathered at the mouth of the mine included many relatives of the dead and dying miners.

“It is very difficult for us to understand why God should let such an awful tragedy happen,” said Handley Moule, a clergyman who was asked to speak to the crowd. “I have at home an old bookmark given me by my mother. It is woven in silk, and when I look at the wrong side of it, I see nothing but a tangled mass of threads. It looks like a big mistake! One would think that whoever made it didn’t know what she was doing. But when I turn it over and look at the right side, I see there, beautifully embroidered, the message, ‘God is love!’ We are looking at this tragedy from the wrong side. Someday we shall view it from another standpoint and we shall understand.”



Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—THE APOSTLE PAUL, ROMANS 8:35,37–39 NKJ



Does Jesus Care?

BY FRANK E. GRAEFF

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress
And the way grows weary and long?

(Refrain)

Oh 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.

Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I’ve said “goodbye”
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

(Refrain)

Oh 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.



{Why suffering?}

Why suffering

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

*Answers to one of life's
most troubling questions*

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

IF GOD IS LOVE AND HE LOVES US, AS THE BIBLE SAYS, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

A: God is not to blame for all the suffering in the world. He's not some kind of monster that enjoys making people suffer. It's not *God* who causes the pain, death, and heartache. The truth is, much of what we suffer is caused by people's selfishness and destructive attitudes and actions.

Take wars, for example, which have

caused untold suffering throughout history. The Bible says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1 KJV). *People* are to blame for the suffering caused by war, because of their own selfishness, greed, pride, and competitive spirit—the destruction of others for selfish gain.

WHAT ABOUT POVERTY? WHAT ABOUT THE MILLIONS WHO DIE OF STARVATION AND DISEASE IN SOME OF THE IMPOVERISHED NATIONS OF THE WORLD? SURELY THEY HAVEN'T BROUGHT THAT UPON THEMSELVES!

Believe it or not, man is largely responsible for poverty as well. Global warming is increasing, rainforests are disappearing, deserts are expanding, and seas are dying. These combined ills are having a disastrous effect on food supplies, especially in already impoverished regions, and all are largely the result of the haves relentlessly striving to have more at the expense of the have-nots. For example, indiscriminate logging for fast money in some developing countries is bringing about ecological disasters and population displacement.

In addition, civil conflicts, driven by political greed contribute to famine and poverty in many nations. Can God be blamed for this? Again it's a case of people bringing suffering on others through selfishness, lack of love, and lack of foresight and concern for future generations.

BUT THE SHORTAGE OF FOOD IS NOT CAUSED SOLELY BY DESERT EXPANSION, FOREST DEPLETION, AND WAR. THERE ARE OFTEN NATURAL

FORCES BEYOND MAN'S CONTROL THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EXTREME POVERTY AND STARVATION. ISN'T GOD TO BLAME FOR THAT?

It's true that some factors are beyond man's control, but ironically, while millions are undernourished, in other parts of the world there are huge surpluses of food. No one needs to go hungry; God's earth provides more than enough. But unfortunately, while many rich Western countries spend hundreds of millions of dollars on storing or destroying their surpluses, even paying farmers *not* to grow certain crops, the poor of the world starve.

Another example of manmade misery and suffering is the pitiful squalor of the poor in the huge cities of some developing countries. God never intended for people to live in crowded, filthy, dehumanizing slums. In most cases those people would have been better off if they had stayed out in the country where the air is clean and there is more food and fewer people—healthful country living as God intended.

In some countries, the poor crowd into the cities to escape civil war, guerrilla activity, or criminal activity in the countryside—more suffering brought on by others' greed and oppression of their fellow man.

Others, unfortunately, are responsible for their own predicament. They see the material success of the middle class and rich in the cities and think that would make them happy. They are drawn to the cities, but often find their economic state worse than before. Modern cities and the suffering they bring are not God's fault; they're a manmade curse.

Also, most of the rich don't share their wealth or lands as they should,

and many don't pay the poor fair wages for their labor or fair prices for their produce. If they did, there would certainly be enough to go around. The Bible repeatedly advises and even commands the rich to share with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7–8; Psalm 41:1; Matthew 5:42). God doesn't want the poor to suffer!

Science has also proven to be a two-edged sword. God has helped man learn more about the world in which we live, which has led to many beneficial discoveries, but much of this knowledge has also been misused, culminating in horrific weapons of war, polluting factories and refineries, cancer-promoting substances, etc. These death-dealing and destructive inventions bring on untold pain and suffering, but they are *not* God's fault.

IS MAN, THEN, SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE PAIN IN THE WORLD TODAY?

No, a lot of it is the work of Satan, also known as the Devil—the powerful spirit being and archenemy of God, whose relentless goal is to make people suffer. In fact, one of the Devil's main objectives is to turn man away from God by pinning the blame on God for his own dirty deeds!

IF GOD IS LOVING AND ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP THE DEVIL AND THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FROM INFLICTING ALL THIS SUFFERING? IF GOD IS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, WHY DOES HE ALLOW IT TO GO ON?

The Bible speaks of a great war in the spirit realm between the forces of good and evil (Ephesians 6:12). God and His angelic forces *do* often stop

Science
has proven
to be a
two-edged
sword.

the Devil from wreaking even more havoc and destruction, but in some cases God allows the Devil to perform his destructive work as a judgment on those who have rebelled against God or refused to follow His natural and spiritual laws.

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil, if He were to do that, He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice, whereby we can choose to do good or evil.

WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER, THEN, IF HE HAD CREATED US ALL TO BE GOOD?

If God had wanted robots, yes, He could have made everybody do only what is right and good. But He purposely limited His own power by creating us with a free will so we could *choose* to both love Him and do what is right—just as parents want their children to love them of their own free will, not because they're forced to. We were put here to make a choice between good and evil, between doing things God's way or our own.

This is the main reason there is so much suffering, misery, pain, ill health, wars, economic troubles, and other woes in the world today—because instead of choosing to love and obey God, many people have decided to rebel against His loving rules, which He made for our health and happiness. Most people want to do things their own way and so must suffer the consequences of their own wrong choices. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

BUT WHY DOES GOD ALLOW BAD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE? NO ONE IS PERFECT, OF COURSE, BUT

WHY DOESN'T HE REWARD THOSE WHO GENUINELY TRY TO DO GOOD AND MAKE RIGHT, LOVING CHOICES BY SPARING THEM FROM SUFFERING?

He does, for the most part. We're all acutely aware when things go wrong, but we often don't see or appreciate what *could* have gone wrong but didn't because of God's loving intervention on our behalf.

Nevertheless, good people do sometimes go through difficult times. That's when it's important to remember—and this can be difficult to grasp—there are *benefits* from suffering. Difficult times shape our character and teach us important lessons. Often more is learned from failure than from success. Also, suffering often brings out the best in those who choose not to become embittered or hardened, and engenders love, tenderness, goodness, and concern for others. The Bible says, “We comfort others with the comfort that we ourselves are comforted with [by] God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Often those who turn to God for comfort and strength in their suffering later want to point others to the One who can also ease their sufferings and help them solve their problems—God and His love, personified in Jesus.

And the best news is that one day soon, God's Word promises, all suffering will come to an end for those who love God. Jesus is going to return to rescue His own from all suffering and whisk them off to Heaven, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, for all these things will be passed away (Revelation 21:4). •

(THE ABOVE ANSWERS ARE BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF DAVID BRANDT BERG.)

But as far as God stopping people from perpetrating suffering and evil ... He would have to put an end to our free will and majesty of choice.



My Best Friend

BY RANDY MEDINA

Four years ago I was rushed by ambulance to an emergency room. Four years ago I began a second life.

All I have left is Jesus, but Jesus is all that matters.

Hospital tests showed that I had late-stage cirrhosis of the liver. I had contracted Hepatitis C about 30 years earlier, when I was a teenager, and it had taken that long to have any noticeable effect on my liver. Now the effect was as severe as it was sudden. I was told that unless I received a liver transplant I would die.

From that day, the hospital became my second home. There I lived through some life-changing experiences—times of tears, times of acute loneliness and despair, times of soul-searching, times in dry and

desolate places, and times in oases of joy. Best of all were my personal visits from Jesus, of which I had two.

The first question that came to me when I heard I was dying was, “Why me?” The second was “What have I done wrong to deserve this?” I didn’t ask those questions in an angry or self-righteous way, but because I wanted to know if there was anything in my life I needed to change. I wanted to become a new person.

Whatever it was, I told the Lord, I was sorry. I knew Jesus had forgiven me and lifted

the burden of guilt when I received Him as my Savior, but I had made a lot of mistakes since and was truly sorry. I replayed every situation I had been in since Jesus had found and rescued me over 30 years earlier. I thought about every person I had hurt and every unloving thing I had said or done. I knew that when I arrived in Heaven the Lord was going to review my life, and I wanted to make that process as painless as possible by coming clean now.

I was put on a waiting list for a liver transplant—a wait that lasted 20 months. During that time, the illness began to affect my brain. I became confused and started losing my memory. At times when I was out of the hospital and needed to get home, I would get lost in my own neighborhood. It was frightening!

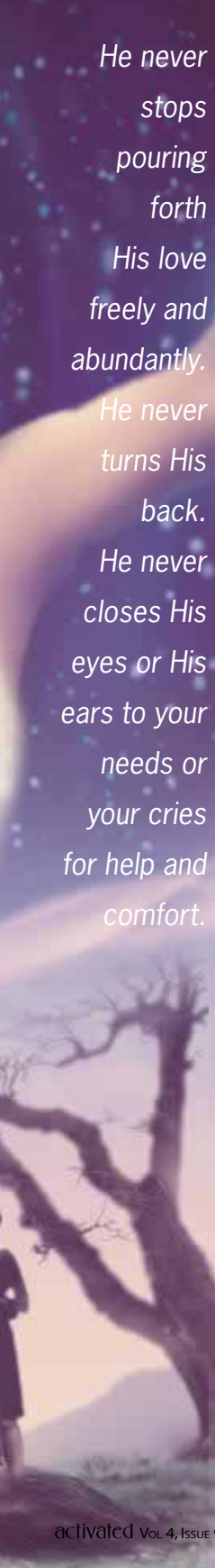
Then one night, after some serious soul-searching, a man appeared in my room. He turned to me and said that He loved me. [Continued on page 11]



Heaven's healing balm

BY MARIA FONTAINE

*From a letter to the parents of five teenagers who
were killed in a traffic accident*



*He never
stops
pouring
forth
His love
freely and
abundantly.
He never
turns His
back.
He never
closes His
eyes or His
ears to your
needs or
your cries
for help and
comfort.*

Dear ones,

MY HEART BREAKS FOR YOU whose hearts are broken. My eyes weep for you who weep. I feel your agony and loss. All I've been thinking about since I heard the news is you who are suffering so unspeakably.

You had such great plans for your children. They were growing up so beautifully, so radiantly, and now they're gone—instantly! Perhaps all you can say is, "Why, Lord? How could You punish us so severely?" My heart breaks for you as you endure such torment of spirit, and I pray that even in your sorrow you can know His peace.

I recently lost the one who was dearest on earth to me, so I know what it's like. I know what it feels like to suddenly realize that things are never going to be the same again. I didn't get a chance to say goodbye either. I didn't get a chance to ask his forgiveness for all the ways I'd failed him. I didn't get a chance to put my arms around him and love him one last time or assure him of how much he meant to me. I know what it's like to battle condemnation, but I also know what it's like to receive the Lord's abundant supply of grace in time of need, His peace that passes all understanding, His strength to go on another day, His answers to my many questions.

At a time like this, the only thing we can do is turn to Jesus and His Word for comfort. I can speak from experience. I know that in spite of the loss, in spite of the tears, in spite of the heartache, in spite of the questions, you can have peace knowing that Jesus loves you. The most important thing for you to remember right now is that the Lord loves you. In spite of the battles, in spite of the loss, in spite of the confusion, in spite of the heartbreak, you must hold on to the knowledge that He loves you.

The Lord's love is unending, unailing, and unchanging. No matter what happens, no matter how dark it looks, no matter how difficult the battle, no matter how dark the tunnel, no matter how long the suffering, Jesus loves you—and He doesn't give His love stingily. He doesn't mete it out a little bit here or a little bit there as you earn it, and then get angry with you and withdraw His love if you are not good enough or make mistakes. That's not the way the Lord does it! He never stops pouring forth His love freely and abundantly. He never turns His back. He never closes His eyes or His ears to your needs or your cries for help and comfort.

When you feel the most desperate and the situation is darkest, when you feel the most confused and hardly even know how to pray, then the Lord will pour forth His love even more abundantly—not less! He knows you need it even more to wash away the pain and wipe away the tears and comfort your broken hearts.

Some of you probably feel great condemnation. Some of you may even be angry with the Lord for not preventing this. Some of you may be feeling bitter. Most of you will be feeling bewildered and shocked and greatly, greatly saddened.

The only thing that can wash away these pains is your faith in the Lord's love, that "He does all things well" (Mark 7:37) and that all things truly work together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). No matter how strange and hard it is to understand, even this will eventually work together for good. You must be assured that Jesus loves you very much and that He hasn't abandoned you now. You must cling to the promises He has given you in His Word. Even when you can't feel His love or see His love, you

can know His love through faith. Your faith in His love is the only thing that is strong enough to quench these fires of sorrow.

Right now you feel that this whole thing is a sign of His lack of love or His anger or His displeasure. You look back and have so many regrets. You're filled with so much remorse. But the Lord's message to you is to let these feelings go—and you *can* let them go! You *must* let them go! Let them be washed away under the flood of the Lord's love.

We don't have to do penance for our failures. We don't have to suffer. We don't have to weep. We don't have to endure condemnation. We can find the peace of the Lord in His forgiveness and love. "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

During my time of sorrow, when I was experiencing feelings of guilt and condemnation, I just couldn't think about the past—not even the good memories of sweet times. I had to leave the past and think about the present. When I looked back at the past, I was overwhelmed with sorrow, but when I refused to dwell on the past but instead focused my attention on the present and the bright future to come, I could feel the assurance of Jesus' love and see the wisdom in His plan. You must not concentrate on the past. It's over with; it's done! In time you'll be able to pull out the happy memories and enjoy them without feeling sadness at every turn, but for now it's probably better to not think about the past at all.

If we only realized how real and how close the spirit world and Heaven are! There is only a veil—only a very thin, almost transparent veil—that separates us from it. Don't feel that you've lost your loved ones, because

you haven't! They knew and loved the Lord in this life, and now they're with Him. They've gone ahead of you to the other side of the veil, where you will one day be reunited in the Lord's infinite eternal love.

They're gone, but they're still with you; they're still close—even closer than they were before. If you listen and have faith, you will hear their whispers comforting and encouraging and instructing you. Even if you had differences when together in this life, as everyone does at one time or another, even if you didn't always see eye to eye, even if you had misunderstandings, things will be different now. Now you'll understand and be more united and closer than ever before. All this is possible if you will only have faith.

This separation will not be for long. As the Bible says, it's only for a "moment." Then you will all be together forever in Heaven, nevermore to be separated, nevermore to feel such pain and loss. In spite of the pain you feel right now, you can be blessed with the hope and knowledge of Heaven and the Lord.

Your loss is great and your pain seems overwhelming, but it is small compared to the loss of those who do not have faith, who do not know Jesus, who don't know what happens to their loved ones when they go on. They have no consolation, no comfort, nowhere to turn. They have no hope of seeing their loved ones again or being reunited. But you who are blessed with the truth of the Bible know that your loved ones are with Jesus and are happy, overjoyed, healthy, strong, and beautiful. This separation is only for a time, and then your pain and tears will be forgotten. Have faith! •

*You will all
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forever in
Heaven,
nevermore
to be
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to feel such
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loss.*

My Best Friend

[Continued from page 7]

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I thought at first that I was hallucinating, but I wasn't—it was real! I knew immediately that the man was Jesus. The room lit up—His love and warmth were that strong—and He kept telling me over and over that He loved me and would always be there. “No matter what you have done, I will always be there. I want to be your best friend.”

As He walked across the room, I thought He was going to bump into a chair, so I said, “Watch out for that chair!” He just chuckled. Who was I to tell Jesus, who with His Father created the universe, to watch out for a chair? What a joke! He had just finished telling me

that He wanted to be my best friend, and that's how it was—like a good laugh between best friends. He didn't talk to me about my faults. He didn't mention anything about my past. He didn't say anything about my illness or whether I would be healed. He only said, “I want to love you, I want to be your friend, and I'll always be there for you.”

I fell asleep, and when I awoke in the morning I prayed. “I don't know what happened last night,” I told Jesus, “but if I wasn't hallucinating, You are going to have to prove it to me.” And that evening it happened again. Jesus appeared in my room and said the same things. The message He was trying to drive home was that any-

time I needed Him, He would be there. Since that experience, I can talk to Jesus just like I would talk to anyone else.

A month and a half after my transplant, I developed problems with my new liver and landed back in the hospital, in intensive care. The doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with me, and eventually sent me home. I was dying again.

After about a month and a half of intense suffering, I couldn't stand the pain any longer and told Jesus that I wanted to go home to Heaven. “If You're not going to heal me,” I told Him, “then take me home.” He chose not to do that, but He was with me when I needed Him most, just like He had promised, and He helped the worst to pass. I'm still here.

I don't know what else Jesus has in store

for me, but I know I'm not the man I was before. He's also given me the best job in the world—telling people about Jesus and what He's done for me. I may not be completely healed, but I'm happy to be alive and have a purpose, and I'm going to continue to love and trust Him.

My life is still on the line. I face death every day. All I have left is Jesus, but Jesus is all that matters. I wake up each morning and say, “Lord, keep me through one more day.” And when I get up and open the shades on my window and see the sun shining out there, I shout for joy. I want to get up and dance! Life with my best friend is precious!

Jesus really, really loves you too. He wants to be your best friend, your buddy. And He will always be there for you. •

(RANDY MEDINA IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THE U.S.)

The power of love is stronger



BY MICHAEL DOOLEY

I HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A VERY EXHAUSTING HUMANITARIAN AID MISSION to a country that had recently suffered a debilitating war. I felt depleted emotionally. Songwriting was the furthest thing from my mind as I tried to deal with the images that still haunted me. Perhaps the most difficult were the images from the hospitals we had visited: the sunken eyes of emaciated children looking blankly into mine; the wistful, sometimes tear-laced smiles of their mothers. The hardness of heart that had caused this suffering rankled within me.

How would Jesus have been with those children, I wondered. How would He have held them, blessed them, healed them? An impression began to form in my mind. There was melody, too, in that silence—one that I could sense rather than hear. I sat down at my keyboard and began to play the music I felt welling up inside. The words began to flow, and I sensed a broken, loving heart that had been healed by the tender touch of the Master's hands nearly 2,000 years earlier.

In about 20 minutes the song was there, almost in its entirety. Tears rolled down my face. Contained in the song was the healing my spirit had been longing for. The pain of those broken lives was still with me, but there was new hope that they could be changed and redeemed by the power of a love that was stronger than all the hatred anyone could contrive and bring against another.

If you haven't met the friend who will love you through thick and thin, the One who holds the keys to overcoming and happiness and joy and eternal life, you can right now by sincerely praying a prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so that all my mistakes and wrongs can be forgiven. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You to please come into my life, give me Your free gift of eternal life, and be my nearest, dearest friend. Amen. •

The Light of Your Love (Song of Mary Magdalene)

BY MICHAEL DOOLEY

I saw how You stooped to lift a child,
Watched how You gently, kindly smiled.
That's when I knew how much I wanted
To be part of You.

I saw how You mended broken lives,
Felt how You cared and sympathized,
Saw how their heartaches made You cry,
And I loved the heart of You.

And all of my hopes, my dreams, my fears,
Seem to dissolve within Your tears,
And I longed to hold You near
And tell You I loved You.

And all of life's cruel and stinging trials
Vanished before Your gentle smile.
That's when I knew my heart's desire
Was to spend my life walking in the light of Your love.

And when You held my upturned face,
Tenderly dried my tears away,
All of my past Your love erased,
And I was born anew.

Then I saw what it cost You to be free;
I wept as I watched You die for me.
That's when I knew that I would be
Forever in love with You.

And when You rose again and came to me,
I knew Your love was for all eternity,
And You would come one day and take me
To be with You.

And in that land of no more tears,
And in that time beyond all years,
You would embrace me, hold me near,
And tell me You loved me.

Where all of life's cruel and stinging trials
Vanish beneath Your radiant smile,
And You fulfill my heart's desire,
And I'll be there forever living in the light of Your love.

(MICHAEL DOOLEY IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE
FAMILY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.)

FEEDING READING

Suffering as God sees it

Some of the world's suffering is the Devil's doing.

Job 1:12–19; 2:6–7

Acts 10:38

2 Timothy 2:26

Some of the world's suffering is self-inflicted, often due to greed.

Proverbs 15:27

1 Timothy 6:9–10

James 4:1–2

James 5:1–3

We often bring on suffering by sin and disobedience.

Genesis 42:21

Job 4:8 reap the same

Psalms 107:17

Jeremiah 30:15

Suffering is sometimes God's loving chastisement.

Proverbs 3:11–12

Hebrews 12:5–12

1 Corinthians 11:32

Revelation 3:19

God has a good and loving reason when He allows suffering.

Genesis 45:4–8; 50:20

Psalms 119:71

Romans 8:28

God comforts and strengthens us when we suffer.

Matthew 5:4

John 14:18

1 Peter 5:10

Suffering can draw us closer to the Lord and teaches us His ways.

Job 23:10

Psalms 94:12

Psalms 119:71

Isaiah 48:10

John 15:2

Hebrews 12:9–11

Other good fruits of suffering:

Deuteronomy 8:2,16
(humility)

Romans 5:3b (patience)

Ecclesiastes 7:2–3
(wisdom)

2 Corinthians 1:4
(compassion)

Keep the faith.

Job 13:15a

Acts 20:23–24

Romans 12:12a

2 Corinthians 7:4b

Philippians 3:8

Hebrews 11:25–27

James 5:10–11

1 Peter 4:13,16

Rewards in Heaven for earthly suffering

Romans 8:18

2 Corinthians 1:7

2 Corinthians 4:17

2 Timothy 2:12a

Revelation 21:4

SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH, in 1949, George Orwell wrote his final work, the classic *1984*. It painted a picture of a chilling future in which the world had fallen under the rule of three great totalitarian governments. The government that controlled what had been Britain, and the United States was called Oceania and was ruled by Big Brother. In Oceania, the state was all important



and to be served with unthinkable loyalty. To achieve that end, its citizens had been divested of all privacy. Without privacy, there was no freedom.

News, books, plays, movies—everything was censored. History was rewritten to suit current propaganda needs. “Thought police” monitored behavior patterns to detect possibly deviant attitudes. Invasive listening devices tuned in to the most intimate conversations.

Perhaps the most effective means of control was the two-way television that looked into every room at offices, factories, and homes. The individual was never free from the surveillance of Oceania’s security forces.

Prophetic as *1984* was, George Orwell could not have imagined how advanced surveillance technology would become. His novel is now

being actualized. Poor Orwell! If he were to walk into the world today and see what it’s like, he would probably die of fright. In his day it was all science fiction. Now it’s reality—and one that’s not going to go away.

In fact, one of the most alarming signs of the times is that people are no longer alarmed by the fact that their every move can be monitored and recorded. Someone can read

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

The Surveillance Society

BY JOSEPH CANDEL

every unencrypted e-mail we send. Monitoring agencies, using geostationary satellites and other means, can tune in to every phone call we make. Every purchase we make with a credit or debit card is stored in a database someplace under our name, which is linked to our address. These networked databases know exactly where we are and, to some extent, what we are doing. By studying spending patterns, others can learn about our tastes and habits.

Computer chip implants are being used to monitor children, prisoners, pets, Alzheimer’s patients, and others. The surveillance cameras that line our streets and monitor stores, parking lots, and private homes are becoming a routine part of daily life the world over. On the Internet our activities can be recorded down to the last mouse click. Big Brother is *here*.

Big Brother has not only arrived, but he is already tightening his grip on the world. From Australia to India, Canada, South America, the U.S., and even Afghanistan, the infrastructure for a One World Government that keeps an eye on people “for their own good and the good of society” is being put in place. Today’s surveillance tools are paving the way for the most monitored society imaginable.

It’s all about control. The Bible predicts that a One World Government is coming, led by a Devil-possessed dictator known in the Bible as the Antichrist or the Beast (Daniel 11:21, 23–24; 8:23–25; Revelation 13:7). To rule the world, the Antichrist must first be able to control the people, and how can he control the people unless he knows what they’re doing?

As incredible as all of these technological advances are and as thought provoking as they may be to those who have read about Big Brother, we really shouldn’t be surprised. The Bible predicted just such a system more than 2,000 years ago.

“And he [the Antichrist’s chief aide, referred to in the Bible as the “false prophet” who “deceives the world”] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on [in] their right hand or on [in] their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast [the Antichrist], or the number of his name. ... His number is 666” (Revelation 13:16–18).

Under this 666 system, no one on earth will be allowed to buy or sell anything unless he or she receives a mark in the forehead or right hand.

Technology is rapidly reaching the point where the coming Mark of the Beast 666 electronic credit system can take over.

Other changes are also taking place in the world that will facilitate the Antichrist’s rise to power. Jesus said that during the period of the Antichrist’s rise to power and seven-year rule, “lawlessness will abound, [and] the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). The Bible also tells us that in those days “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13). Who will “save” the world from the economic collapse, horrible wars, terrorism, etc.?—The Antichrist, of course.

With all this technology in the hands of increasingly ungodly men, the world is playing directly into the hands of the Antichrist and his authoritarian One World Government that promises “technology and security for all”—but surveillance and control as well, including oppression by brute force of those who step out of line and all-out war against those who refuse to bow down and worship him as God (Revelation 13:5–7, 14–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).

The immediate future is not very bright, but to be forewarned is to be forearmed and ready to resist the Antichrist and his mark. And the not-too-distant future will be brighter than ever when Jesus returns (Matthew 24:29–31). Then we will enjoy the dawn of a wonderful new world, where the lion will lie down with the lamb and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:6–9). •

Everything is falling into place for the New World Order to take off, and it's happening fast.

Making things right

Life is a great cycle of cause and effect. Everyone makes choices every day, and everyone's choices affect others. The combination of everyone's choices and the effect those choices have on others makes the world what it is.

Every problem can be traced to some unloving or selfish choice someone made. These sins are the major cause of problems in the world today—selfishness and lack of love. People either don't see how their wrong choices affect others or they don't care enough to do things differently.

You may feel that the world is too messed up, that too many wrong choices have been made, that it doesn't matter much what you do, that it's hopeless. But that's not true. Just as every problem can be traced to a wrong decision, every solution begins with a wise and loving decision to do the right thing, the loving and unselfish thing.

A little bit of love can make a lot of difference. One act of kindness or unselfishness can start a whole chain reaction of events that will, in the long run, make life a lot better for a lot of people. So don't despair because there is so much suffering and grief and wrong in the world. Instead, do what you can to make things right and encourage others to do the same. The world won't change in a day, but you can make a difference if you try.

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

