

NOTES ON TODAY'S TOPIC.

Romans 8 vv18-25; 35-39.

If you could ask God one question: How can a loving God allow suffering?

A Personal Spring-clean

- a) Grandfather God
- b) Genie God
- c) Control God
- d) Schoolmaster God

A Personal Relationship

- a) Self-giving God v3
- b) Life-imparting God v10
- c) Father God v15
- d) Suffering God v17
- e) Caring God v26
- f) Purposeful God v28
- g) Ever-loving God v38

A Perspective Transformed

- a) Suffering seen in the light of glory v18
- b) The coming liberation of this frustrated creation v20-21
- c) The new bodies every believer will have v23

Notes for discussion this week

Re-read Romans 8 and your notes from the talk:

- what things did you learn that have helped you to see the God of love in suffering?
- what things did you learn that have changed your attitude to suffering?
- what encouragements did you receive to keep trust God in the midst of suffering?

Discuss these quotes from Thomas Case who wrote his Treatise on Affliction in 1652 from prison where he was held because of his faith 'God has no such obedient children as those whom he nurtures in the school of affliction... Affliction empties us of ourselves, and makes us fly to Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength.'

'When the God of heaven has famished all our gods on earth, and has starved us of our creature comforts, in any way whatsoever, then we can hunger after and taste the sweetness, the fullness, which is in Christ Jesus. O then, Christ is a King to govern, a Prophet to teach, and a Priest to save! How precious! Give me nothing but Jesus or else I die!'

"We are proud creatures, full of self confidence and so God by strange and unexpected providences... brings us under the very sentence of death that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."

How does suffering drive us to an increasing reliance on God? (see 1 Pet 1)

How is a Christian's attitude to suffering a witness to others? (see 1Cor1:18-2:5)

How does the hope we looked at last week and this week of a new creation help us in our suffering? (see Rev 21:1-5, 22:1-6; 2 Cor 4:16-5:10)

If a friend was to ask you tomorrow, 'how can a loving God allow suffering' what would you say?