

WHERE WAS GOD? - THE TRAGEDY

In the midst of the awesomeness, a touch comes, and you know it is the right hand of Jesus Christ. You know it is not the hand of restraint, correction, nor chastisement, but the right hand of the Everlasting Father. Whenever His hand is laid upon you, it gives inexpressible peace and comfort, and the sense that “underneath are the everlasting arms,” (Deuteronomy 33:27) full of support, provision, comfort and strength.

— Oswald Chambers

C H A P T E R 1

WHERE WAS GOD? THE TRAGEDY

*Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock
of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.*

(Psalm 31:2)

*God is not unjust: He will not forget your work and the
love you have shown Him as you have helped His people
and continue to help them.*

(Hebrew 6:10, NIV)

Friday, the 5th day of March 2010 didn't mean much to me then, except that the following day was Independence Day Holiday. It was just like any of the past days and I didn't expect anything bad to happen, but good health and relief from the pain I was experiencing in my left shoulder, as my wife, my friend, Kwesi Abaidoo and I went to the Chiropractic Clinic to collect a medical examination report.

Two days earlier I had visited the clinic and explained to the doctor about how I felt. The understanding given me on my first visit to the doctor was that the meeting was meant to determine my treatment needs based on my case history, and whether or not I could benefit

from the chiropractic treatment. After listening to my medical history and my primary concern the doctor directed me to take series of X-rays for his study in order to make a full determination of my case.

On my second visit I presented the X-rays and the doctor proceeded to explain the report of findings from them and conducted further examination procedures as part of the means to determine the treatment needed. I found the examination rigorous and I suffered weakness and severe pains in my left leg after the procedures. I had to call my wife to come over for me after the examination since I couldn't drive home. The following day I felt a bit alright. The weakness in the leg subsided albeit with some amount of pain when I stepped on it. Then the next day feeling much better I decided go for the examination report.

After the report was explained to me I was scheduled to go through series of therapeutic treatments to correct the problems detected from the X-rays and the examination.

I was billed to start the chiropractic treatments from that day. Although I suffered a near paralysis during the examination procedure the previous day, I still consented to go through the treatment because I thought I would receive relief from the pains I was experiencing.

The Chiropractic Treatment

From the many literatures I read, the Chiropractic treatment consisted of a wide range of manipulation techniques with the use of the hands and some simple hand- held equipment designed to improve the function of the affected part of the body and to relieve pains and muscle spasms. In order to ascertain the cause of a patient's symptoms, the Chiropractor will conduct a series of examinations as well as listen to the patient's case history. X-rays are also taken, as they can reveal

the presence of any fractures, spinal misalignments, joint and bone disease, and other aspects of the patient's health.

For the fact that I went through the initial screening procedures I had the hope that nothing would go wrong. Also testimonies from friends who had been there gave me the assurance that the treatment would be successful. Did I make a wrong judgement or was it God working me into accepting the lessons in life?

The Chiropractor's manipulation of my neck that day was so excruciatingly painful that it left me screaming and groaning throughout the process. When I complained, all the doctor said was that 'pain is good'. I spent less than 30 minutes on the table and when I was through with it I could not lift myself from the treatment table. When I was helped up I couldn't sit up by myself and found myself seemingly floating, experiencing what I later learnt was referred to as *Phantom limb sensation*. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Facts matter*:

Phantom limb syndrome (or sensation) is the ability to feel sensations and even pain in a limb or limbs that no longer exist or the sensations that may be perceived in people who have survived strokes but have lost function of certain body parts or who have spinal cord injury or peripheral nerve injury.¹

I noticed the Chiropractor was confused about what had happened to me and he instructed that I should be put in a wheelchair and sent to my car. He told my wife she shouldn't worry and that everything would be fine. It was not till we got home that my wife realized I was paralysed from a little above my mid-section down. I had become a quadriplegic. I also had difficulty using my hands. My wife later told me she noticed the procedure for all the patients treated including me that day appeared to be the same and that made her suspicious of the doctor's competence.

Was the Practitioner Negligent Or Was God At Work?

After studying the X-rays together with the outcome of the examination the doctor informed me the cause of the pain in my shoulder was as a result of a misalignment in the spine. He also took pains to run by me the various misalignments (which he referred to as subluxations) in the various sections of the spine he detected from the X-rays and the contribution of defects in each section of the vertebra column, but assured me he could correct those defects. He failed to let me know the possible outcomes.

I told him I had the option of a surgery, as it had already been explained to me before seeing him (the chiropractor), and so if it was that serious then I would consult a Neurologist instead. But he was so positive and confident that I gave in. After the discussion on the diagnosis and the treatment plan and further explanations I accepted to undergo the treatment. What he didn't do was to make me undergo a CT-Scan or MRI to determine the severity of the so-called "movements within the vertebra column".

I later learned from the *Solicitors Advisory Panel's* online legal advice that a Chiropractor's negligence can take many forms. Advising on *Chiropractor Negligence Claims* the solicitors wrote:

As a fully qualified medical practitioner, a Chiropractor should be able to detect, diagnose and treat medical conditions in their patients but can also make as many errors – if not more – than a regular doctor. Chiropractor's negligence can arise when a Chiropractor fails to diagnose a physical complaint associated with the skeleton, nervous system or soft tissues around the spine properly. They can also be guilty of chiropractor negligence when not giving you their full attention during treatment – and as the spine is such a delicate feature of the body, mistreating it can result in damage such as paralysis or even a stroke when dealing

*with the vertebral artery around the neck area.*²

Writing on the *Patient's Injury* resulting from the chiropractic treatment and basing it on the American Medical Malpractice Liability Law, a medical malpractice lawyer at *MedicalMalpractice.com* also argued that:

*The Chiropractor is held to a certain standard of due care when practicing his profession. If a Chiropractor falls below this standard and a patient is injured as a result, the Chiropractor must be held accountable and must pay damages for professional negligence.*³

Solicitors Advisory Panel again pointed out that paralysis from spinal injury is not the only problem caused by chiropractor's negligence. They said that 'other potential injuries include ruptured discs, torn ligaments, cracked vertebrae and damage to the muscle and nerves. Many of the injuries caused by chiropractor negligence can cause long term discomfort and problems leading to future health issues later in life'².

But was the Chiropractor negligent? Did he fail to detect and diagnose all the problems associated with my cervical vertebra and so couldn't predict the outcome? Or was it God working His own way in my life even if it was that tragic and painful?

Reflecting on what had befallen me, I thought I had been very stupid to allow myself to go through the process the second time after what had happened to me during the initial examination procedures. Several thoughts run through my mind and I blamed myself for my predicaments. I said to myself that maybe I didn't seek the face of God enough before deciding to go through the therapy.

I also thought maybe God was speaking to me all along but I was not listening closely enough. Somehow, however, I was encouraged by

the many scriptures that flooded my mind such that I came to the realization that after all, maybe it was for me to learn a good lesson from the experience I was going through, but I still had several questions unanswered.

My wife was upset though, when I remarked that the experience was worth it. She questioned what good lesson there was to learn in that terrible state. I said to myself that although life may seem unfair always, the Almighty God, the Righteous One is always faithful and I encouraged myself in the Lord. His word says:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them —

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

Unfortunately, the day following the medical accident was a holiday so the Chiropractic clinic didn't open; my wife made several calls to the doctor to inform him about the seriousness of my situation, but the calls went unanswered. It was not until the third day that my wife eventually met the doctor and in the discussion, although he did not accept his fault, it was clear he did not take the necessary precautions and due care when administering the treatment. He initially insisted I should be brought back for further treatment, but when asked whether he was going to detain me and get me back on my feet, he declined and said I should be taken to the hospital for surgery.

The Surgery

My wife and I spent the week confused and not knowing what to do. It took the intervention of a doctor friend, Dr. Yvonne Brew to realize the serious implications of my situation; the fact that my nerves were

not communicating with my brain and that a further delay would lead to non-functioning of my lungs with its attendant dire consequences.

I never realized I was dying slowly as the spinal cord continued to be compressed and that no communication was going on between my brain and the rest of the nervous system in my body parts until God brought in several ‘angels’ to attend to me, and one of such angels as I said was Dr Brew. God showed her what to do and backed by the prayers of many brothers and sisters. God turned what the devil intended to be my death into a testimony.

On March 11, 2010, I went in for a MRI at 37 Military Hospital and then was given a referral note to Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital to see a Neurosurgeon. Upon examination of my case at the Neuro-Centre it was declared an emergency one.

The doctors informed me that the paralysis occurred because my spinal cord became blocked by the cervical vertebra (it was referred to as *significant C5/C6 anterior cord compression*) as a result of the severe manipulation of the neck. The rest of the nerves and muscles would be unable to function unless the spinal cord was freed for messages to flow freely from the brain to all parts of my body, especially the muscles and nerves affected, and get them functioning again.

I was admitted on March 18, 2010 for surgery, however due to the number of cases the hospital had to attend to I had to wait until I had my turn on March 22, 2010. Two weeks prior to the emergency surgery to release the compression and to remove the damaged bone in the neck and repair the prolapsed spinal cord, the pain I bore was very intense, but God continually revealed himself to me and encouraged me.

The waiting was stressful. Meanwhile the pain in my left shoulder was becoming increasingly painful by the day. As I was lying in bed

awaiting the doctor's confirmation for the surgery several thoughts raced through my head. It was hard to keep control of my thoughts of the mixed anticipation, anxiety, and yet was not in the least afraid of the outcome of the surgery. My greatest anticipation was to regain the ability to walk soon after the surgery.

My mind was somehow directed to reflect on how Jesus must have anticipated his suffering whiles praying with the disciples in the garden. He knew what was to come, in both his physical suffering and His emotional suffering of betrayal. But He had to endure that agony and bore the stripes on His back, received from the whipping on my behalf because He loves me. I knew I also had to bear what I was going to go through because by those stripes I was healed.

One of the things God taught me was that in all the sufferings Job went through he never accused God of wrongdoing and so I kept my reactions to the tragedy in check as much as possible while on admission. The Lord also assured me that my situation was only temporary, but for how long He didn't tell me.

Thankfully when all these were happening around me I never thought about death; never got worried nor doubted that the hand of God was on me, but believed that a miracle was going to happen to me in a matter of days or at most a month. Indeed one of my first prayers to God during my incapacitation was a conditional prayer. I told God to answer my request for healing very clearly, miraculously and instantly so that as a teacher of one of the children's Sunday school classes at Church, I will have a proof for teaching the children that when we pray God answers. You see, I missed the point there!! Well, in my desperation that was what I thought about – that in their seeing the instant answer to their prayers for me they will have a proof for what they have been taught and will be strengthened in their faith.

I spent one more week on admission before the surgery was performed. I tried in several ways within that week to concentrate by relaxing my body, continuously adjusting the towel I had improvised for a pillow, allowing my left arm to move into different positions as I lay in bed waiting, but in whichever way I turned the arm it was still quite painful. I shared the room with a tribal community chief from one of the towns in the northern part of the country, who is a Muslim but that didn't bother me at all and since the pains wouldn't allow me to sleep I spent most part of the night praying aloud.

Somehow he also didn't feel disturbed by my prayers and was not really bothered and on the day he was leaving the hospital for home he told my wife, "your husband is a good Christian and so don't worry he will soon recover from that condition and walk".

The morning after the surgery one of the young doctors came to me during their ward rounds and asked; "Do you know why they had to perform the surgery on you?" I told him it was to remove the broken neck bone, free the spinal cord and replace the bone with an implant. I wasn't sure if I said the right thing but I noticed he seemed impressed. He then said that in cases such as what I had gone through there was the possibility that some of the nerves may have been damaged after being compressed for so long a period and at my age there was no chance they could grow back or repair themselves again. I said nothing to him and just watched him leave.

At this point I was very much disappointed in that young doctor. All that I could say in my head was "whose report should I believe?" My faith in God told me I was going to get back on my feet very soon and I refused to accept that medical explanation.

I knew if I believed what the doctor had said my faith would be severely bruised so I quickly turned off my reception from what he said and the

argument with it. I refocused my thoughts on Jesus and thought about how comforting it was for Him to have angels ministering to Him after His agony and to have His mother and His beloved friend and apostle, John at the foot of the cross when all the others forsook him. Jesus was not alone in the grave either. The angels again ministered to Him, and certainly I knew I was not alone in my situation.

I felt the strong presence of the Lord and I knew the Lord Jesus was waiting for me in the ward. My faith told me He had instructed His angels to minister to me there. What was comforting to me had also been comforting to Him; for by his stripes I was healed and that included my nerves, muscles and all.

I told my wife what the young doctor had said later on when the ward rounds were over. She was so disturbed that she followed them to talk to the head of the team for confirmation. Somehow the head of the medical team was embarrassed by the information and so told my wife that it was impossible for any of them to tell when a nerve was damaged or not and that they don't discuss such issues. He told my wife to ignore that information.

You see, though the doctor may have given the right medical implications of my condition from his study and knowledge, the devil would use the same to bring fear to any believer, including me when facing such crisis. I knew if I should focus on what he said the devil would make me feel abandoned by God and ask "where was God when the tragedy was going to happen?" He would also magnify the problem and make me think that what I was going through was too big for God to deal with.

I would end up being filled with so much guilt that I would begin to feel I was not good enough to approach God for solution. Remember he did same to Job in the bible account through his friends. He may even

send people to ostensibly comfort me but would end up chastising and judging me knowing that I already felt bad about that information concerning my nerves.

When faced with tragedy we must put our trust in the fact that God has always remained the same no matter the circumstances. He is the same today as He was yesterday. He does not lie and He never changes although a lot will change in our lives and around us. He is His Word, the spoken Word and his word stands true forever. But in spite of this truth the way one reacts to difficult situations really depends on the kind of relationship one forms with Him. My initial reaction to these tragic situations revealed the closeness of my relationship with God.

When one's relationship with Him is very close and cordial one does not lose heart over painfully threatening circumstances because one lives by faith in every word that God has spoken and recorded in the Scriptures. We are confident that God is aware of whatever we go through, experiences we go through and that He allows them because He knows we can handle them. For this reason we can trust God that our light and momentary troubles will be achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs all the suffering we will endure on this side of eternity.

With this knowledge I fastened my eyes, not on what was happening to me, but on the hope of receiving my restoration any time soon, because He had made known to me that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal and I believed it. And even though I could not see the good ends to which God was working things out, I was certain and firm in my faith that a time would come when I would understand and see His purpose more clearly.

After my discharge from the hospital I had to go through intensive physiotherapy sessions to try and regain my mobility. I was wheelchair

bound for about eight (8) months before I was able to stand and take few steps with the help of a walking aid. I had to be lifted from either my bed or from the chair at the living room onto the wheelchair. I had to be pushed to and from the therapy areas by a family member who had to spend several hours of his time with me. I found this quite frustrating. It was within these periods I suffered much excruciating physical pains and emotional imbalances too.

THE HEALING PROCESS



The healthy and strong individual is the one who asks for help when he needs it, whether he's got an abscess on his knee or in his soul.

— Rona Barrett

C H A P T E R 2

THE HEALING PROCESS

*“Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I
will be saved, for you are the one I praise.”*

(Jeremiah 17:14)

With the passage of time the weeks and days melded in inconceivable sameness as I was slowly beginning to heal and was focusing on my future. Now ushered into the “Isolation Chamber” I thought the lessons were going to be learnt with ease and glamour. I sensed God was cushioning my shock by infusing me with a spirit of acceptance of the reality of the situation. I had dreams of instant healing and assurance of God’s mighty hands in the healing process. And I was expecting a spontaneous remission of the paralysis. However the more I prayed the less the occurrence of the instantaneous healing I so much yearned for. God did not perform an instant miracle; He neither did answer in the way I had so desperately expected, nor according to the dreams which my unconscious mind kept punctuating my nights, diffusing my perception of the reality.

I therefore had to accept that whatever the circumstances, God knew what was best for me. In my cheerful times and in times of trials, I was

sure of this – God was not far from me, He was with me always and He wanted to bless me and to mature me. When it seemed nothing was going right for me, I had to take time to think about what the Lord had done for me in the past and give him thanks. I had to learn to deal with the frustrations and roller coaster emotions.

I didn't get all the answers to the many questions that flooded my mind when the tragedy struck but I had enough assurance from the presence of the Lord and through His word to trust Him to take me through.

I know if I really believed in the power of prayer, I didn't have to get worried about the non-realisation of my heart's desires. I told myself if I continued to listen to my mind I would only end up having issues with God and His ability to restore me. The devil would suggest failure to me and make me accept that it was all over. Even through the struggles I still refused to see myself the way I was; I saw myself in the light of what the word of God has said about me.

This was how I approached God's dealing with me. I knew that the Word of God has said if I believe in Him nothing will be impossible for Him. Although under the instructions of the Neurosurgeon I had to undergo physiotherapy I never really accepted it as an alternative for God's divine healing. I don't mean to say it is not necessary or important. On several occasions in faith I did tell my Physiotherapists that I believed I would come over from the weekend completely healed supernaturally and walking normally and that she would not have to worry to come to attend to me again. Although it didn't happen the way I believed and expected I never lost my faith in the healing power of God.

I always remember the narrative about Jesus' healing of the blind men on different occasions using different methods. In one instance instead of the normal prayer and casting away of demons or the declaration of

“your faith has made you free”, he spat on the ground and mixed the sputum with the soil, applied it to the eyes of the blind man and asked him to go and wash in a pool. I sincerely think it was not the sputum, nor the mud, nor even the washing in the pool that healed the man, but rather the healing power of God, the man’s faith and his obedience to Jesus that healed him. For me it also shows that God’s healing takes different forms.

From then on my prayer was, “thank you Jesus for healing me, and now do manifest it in the flesh”, although once awhile in my pains I would cry out “Lord I need a miracle”. As I said, occasionally when my expectation was so much or when I got a bit frustrated because of some discomforts I was going through my prayer would then be “Lord Jesus this is the day for the manifestation – I need a miracle!” However I never got discouraged and never thought that God had abandoned me nor doubted that God will heal me.

Enduring The Pains

Recovering from the paralysis came with several challenges. Graciously the Lord also provided me several lessons to overcome my weaknesses. The first lesson I had to painfully go through was endurance. I had to endure pains; nerve pains and muscle pains. They were not pleasant at all. There were times that I sat in the room alone and wept because the pains were so intense and unbearable. I said to myself that if Job went through much more pains than I was going through then I could understand why he was upset when he was not hearing from God.

I also had to endure periods of loneliness and frustration. It was not because there were no people around me to keep me company. It was that I had so much on my mind to do but my immobility limited me to very, very few activities, and I was frustrated at being ‘fixed’ to one place, and felt alone. The fact of the matter was that I had taken so

many things for granted in the past. For instance, I would go to bed, have a sound sleep and in the morning spring out of bed and not even consider it a miracle to be awake. I did take time to say “Thank you Jesus”, but I did that as routine because I thought it was just “normal” to go to bed and get up. What was the big deal about such a normal occurrence?!! Now I was facing the reality of the grace and favour of God.

I was awed by the need to wait patiently on God for his timing, but I was dedicated to totally depend on him for the best for my life. My wife and I, hoped and prayed, but month after month went by without the quick fix we were expecting and I had to learn to endure. After about a year I was on my feet, and though I walked clumsily, we had so much to thank God for.

While my wife was steadfast in her support for me, I began to get frustrated as I experienced excruciating pains in my legs and lower back, feeling trapped in such crevasse of affliction. I recall one particularly painful period when I sat alone and really wept like a baby. There I asked God why He was letting me go through such a difficult time. I began to ask why me but almost instantly the response came – if not you, who should it be? I knew immediately that it was God answering me. Then I said, “God I’m ready to go through it.” So I stopped crying and vowed never to cry again no matter how painful the situation I was going through.

But the questions didn’t stop coming. Oftentimes questions flooded my heart and occupied my mind. Why should life be so unfair? Why did people who weren’t committed to God as much as I, got life easy? When was this situation going to turn around for me? Was there something wrong with me? Was I being punished for something I did wrong? I must confess I never got answers to these questions.

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be fighting the bitterness within because bitterness is a displaced anger. In Dr. Linden's special article on Post-traumatic Embitterment Disorder in the Journal Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics in 2003, he argues that:

Bitterness is actually a medical disorder and should be categorised as post-traumatic embitterment disorder (PTED)...

And went on to estimate that:

... between one and two per cent of the population is embittered and by giving the condition its proper name, people with PTED will then receive the therapeutic attention they deserve.⁵

This means our inability to tackle the bitterness plaguing us will lead eventually to serious traumatic disorders. The worst of all is when one is affected spiritually because bitterness has not been dealt with decisively owing to the person's inability to forgive offences from church members or accept God's love, thus creating doubts about one's relationship with God. However, when bitterness is addressed through Godly counsel and is resolved effectively, the afflicted person is able to accept God's love and then forgiveness returns, giving that person the freedom to approach and relate with God.

Looking back at my experience, I knew it is in these moments of hurt and pain that I should be reminded that Christ forgave me no matter what I had done in the past and that He was not out there to punish me through my suffering. He still loves me unconditionally and does always forgive me when I am truly sorry. This I also knew had to be reflected in dealing with the doctor I presumed had caused so much pain in my life, I sincerely needed to forgive him and so I did.

Where bitterness might have been caused by our wrong reaction to circumstances such as illness, disappointment, etc. with its

concomitant anger towards the Lord Himself, one may be left in a state of unending resentment towards God. But my advice is “kill it” before it utterly destroys your loving relationship with God. In such circumstance one would have to accept the sovereignty and providence of God. Incidentally the first book I was given to read during my healing period and which inspired me greatly was Dr Fred Deegbe’s book ‘Forgive God!’ In this book he suggested that God really cannot sin against us, so when we feel bitter towards God because of what we may be going through:

We may have to go through a process with God that resembles “forgiving God”, ... and for us to be able to forgive God, we must seek to understand our life in those circumstances from God’s perspective.⁶

And we must do well to complete the process by restoring our;

... friendship with God that has been marred.⁶

The embittered person against God must again remember that the love of God, especially the one shown on the cross through Jesus’ gracious suffering for us was enough reason to get back to God and give him thanks accordingly and accept His sovereignty.

The bible says that once God forgives us our sins he blots them out of his mind, remembering them no more but rather pours His love towards us as dearly beloved children (Romans 5:5) so that our hope in a future permanent union with Him will not be a disappointment.

... For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Jeremiah 31:34 (NKJV)

And you letting go and holding on to God will enable you experience true relief from the pains deep down your heart enabling you to seek out fellowship and accountability for your healing from bitterness. If you are struggling with un-forgiveness or bitterness, turn in to God and allow the Holy Spirit to help you release it to Him.

Walking In God's Providence

According to biblequery.org, theologians use two words to conceptualise two ways of God's will working in the life of the Christian. They called them Providence and Concurrence.

Providence is the word to describe the concept that God orchestrates everything that occurs as part of his plan, whereas Concurrence is the word to describe the situation that someone may do something for a reason, even an evil purpose, and then God will specifically turn that event for a good purpose,⁷ just as it occurred in the life of Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery.⁷

The providence of God is therefore the belief that God has a plan for all mankind and the earth He created and that He is working in the affairs of mankind every day, appropriating things and fitting them together to accomplish his divine purpose. I therefore learned that God's providence was partly the reason for my situation. The providence of God also refers to God's guidance, protection, control and preservation in the lives of mankind to cause His will to occur in His appointed time.

As I indicated earlier, part of my spiritual battle was against bitterness – an embittered and resentful spirit which locked me in, causing my inner man to struggle, refusing to see the need for forgiveness and not wanting to accept that the Lord was fitting things together to accomplish his own divine purpose. But Paul advised:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:31, 32 (NIV)

The Spirit of God stepped in and made His grace available to deal with my struggle with loneliness and bitterness. I was empowered to fight bitterness, especially in my mind and heart, and to allow the Holy Spirit show the right character in me – love and forgiveness. I filled the emptiness with the character of the Holy Spirit, accepting God's providence. The bible says:

Therefore as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13 (NIV)

Sometimes the storms of life blowing at me became so powerful that it seemed almost impossible to see how God was guiding my life through that horrendous tragedy, but I now know by faith that He had always been in control all along. And because I knew He was in complete control, I believed nothing in the world could stop His master plan for me.

Yet knowing this truth sometimes leaves me with a theological dilemma. How can I say that God is in ultimate control, sovereign and providential, while He still allows us to make decisions for ourselves? How can I be hearing great promises from Him and still things go terribly wrong in my life?

I believe the purpose of God's providence is for my ultimate good and it is to grant me the grace to accept His sovereignty in the happenings

in my life, and so I had to graciously accept His will in the healing process. Therefore my suffering may be serving the purpose of His providence. If Joseph and Job endured the pains they went through and acknowledged the providence of God and served Him in sincerity all I needed to do was to walk in newness of mind and walk in holiness before Him.

When Job protested about the fairness of what he was going through because his friends attacked his innocence, God had to intervene and speak sternly at Job. He questioned him concerning his apparent obstruction of His plan in his life (Job 38:1-2; 42:1-3). In every move my prayers will be before Him for direction. His words assure me of His loving response:

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who are evil.

1 Peter 3:12 (NIV)

A key factor of God's providence however, is that through it He provides my needs. He provided me with encouragement and guidance. God put people in my life in those critical times to guide me, and so I moved forward knowing that God was with me and that He will not abandon me to my fate. And now that the sting of the storm has reduced a little, I feel better. Most times when I didn't have food, just on time someone would provide for us. I would be thinking, 'I don't have money to get food for the family!' But then I trusted the Lord anyway because I knew the Lord was asking me to rely on him because he would provide all my needs.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)

I am aware that only God could make things happen the way they did in my life daily. So the Lord kept providing for me and in that way He encouraged my faith to grow. I remained obedient to be in the place God had taken me, and He constantly provided for me and my family no matter how hard sometimes it seemed our faith had been pushed to the wall.

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. . . your deep feelings of anguish right now and wants you to experience His comfort with which He comforts His children when afflicted. The Psalmist said:

For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

Psalm 22:24 (NIV)

The Word of God provides encouraging comfort as it reminds us of God's love for us. It assures us of God's presence with us and for us. David, though described as "a man after God's own heart," experienced loneliness too at a certain period in his life. During those moments he turned to God and trusted Him fully. In Psalm 25:16 he cried to the Lord and pleaded that God should turn to him in his period of loneliness. He said:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. (NIV)

And so God was gracious to David and He turned to him. Indeed God will not withhold good things from those who love Him and therefore, to face one's loneliness and overcome it and its effects one must remove any sense of inadequacy and tap into God's sufficiency which is available for everyone. It is very important for the lonely person to become aware of the presence of God in his or her situation and to take particular notice of all of the other special relationships He has also placed in his or her life.

Focusing on the goodness and love of God, and not on whatever is missing in one's life, is the solution. This eliminates the tormenting emotions, fears and pains of loneliness, leading one to a happier and more fulfilling life. The hymn writer says:

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.¹¹*

Quoting from the hymn book I suggest the use of music in dealing with loneliness. As aspirin relieves pain by blocking pain receptors thereby raising the pain threshold so does music. Sweet soothing music raises the threshold of pain in times of loneliness and assuages the effect of the pain. Music is harmony! Great godly music is one sure therapy for hurting lonely hearts.

As Christians we may face problems but whatever the problems there is no reason to live like orphans in loneliness when we have God as our Father. Only trust and obey and you'll see the deliverance of the Lord, knowing that He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

AND THE STORM CAME



The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.'

— Billy Graham

Your faith is as strong as your knowledge of the word of God

— Anonymous

C H A P T E R 4

AND THE STORM CAME

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord
delivers him from all.*

(Psalm 34:19)

Our journeys through this fast changing world often present us with several scenarios of climatic changes. And these changes come with their own challenges to life. In the same vein we are confronted with the storms of life from time to time. In much the same way the severe weather conditions like droughts and floods usher in these climatic changes, the storms of life also bring to us many physical as well as spiritual changes. Indeed some of the storms that come upon us in life do not give any warning at all but come suddenly as it happened in the case of Job. We may suddenly lose someone we love; we may have a bitter disappointment, or financial decline that may ruin one's business forever. Job after losing his children also had to deal with a physical illness that changed his life for a long time before he was restored.

Just as it is very frightening to be caught up in the natural storms, especially when they threaten to devastate and unsettle one's life

forever, so it is to be caught in the storms of life. The storms of life are synonymous to natural storms. They both can be tough and rough. And both can leave destruction in their wake.

Well, it is a fact that not all the natural storms come suddenly. Some could be predicted several days or even months before they actually happen. Some of life's storms like some weather changes could be predicted studying the turn of events. These life storms may come slowly just like one sees the sky grow darker and darker and then the visibility of one's life becomes dimmer until eventually it seems a deep dark frightening black cloud has enveloped the person. Sometimes there are clear warnings far in advance before they occur. The changes that accompany them then become disturbing when one fails to act proactively on the warnings.

Just as the lightning strikes across the sky, a life's storm could also strike at anyone, resulting in severe tragedies. But God knows all things before they occur; He has also given us the power to make intelligent choices. The devil, as the Scripture has stated, is looking for anyone he can prey on and devour. Whatever type of storm the devil can dream up, he'll always try to throw it at us to test our faith in God. But, our knowledge and relationship with God should strengthen us, such that we do not allow these storms to destroy us.

From childhood my life had been full of storms of many kinds. But this present storm was sudden and unpredictable. It dealt a heavy blow to me and my family. I soon realised how the storms had a way of simplifying one's life, because when they came all the non-essentials of my life quickly fell away, as the things that were really important came clearly to the fore and into focus.

Rather than going through this storm of life in annoyance and viewing the whole situation as a nuisance, I had to consider ways of picking

the positives out of it. I tried my best not to view the storms of life as nuisance so that my judgement of the results they brought would not be clouded. For Jerry Bridges argued that the Christian's adversity (storm) is to be viewed as God's training kit because it brings us out of our petty desires. He said:

One thing we may be sure of, however: For the believer all pain has meaning; all adversity is profitable. There is no question that adversity is difficult. It usually takes us by surprise and seems to strike where we are most vulnerable. To us it often appears completely senseless and irrational, but to God none of it is either senseless or irrational. He has a purpose in every pain He brings or allows in our lives. We can be sure that in some way He intends it for our profit and His glory.¹²

I was hospitalized on March 18, 2010 for surgery to free a blocked and injured spinal cord and that alone was traumatic for me because it was the second time in my life that I had been on admission in my entire lifetime. The first was when I was admitted for snake bite. I was in the primary school then. I had hoped that immediately after this surgery to free my injured spinal cord, I would gain the strength in my legs and walk home. I was wrong and had to leave the hospital still in wheel chair.

The few weeks after the surgery were quite comforting with all the friends and church members visiting and encouraging me. My faith was so high then and I prayed for instant healing from God. And the several refreshing dreams I dreamt about healing calmed me, assuring me I would be healed in the shortest possible time. For instance on Sunday, June 6, 2010, Monday, June 14 and Wednesday, June 23, I had almost the same dreams in which I was in bed and suddenly God touched me and strength came into my legs and I got out of bed and went about my normal work. But these were only dreams.

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