

THE BENEFITS OF A[NOTHER] MISCARRIAGE

By Omri Miles

On Friday, December 15, 2017, my wife and I heard those all-too-familiar words yet again, “Yeah, I’m really sorry guys. I don’t see a heartbeat.” The doctor was very sincere as he stared at the ultrasound machine and seemed to regret the words as he spoke them. Our baby was supposed to be about 9 weeks developed at that point. This was our third miscarriage. I remember the first time that I heard of someone having three miscarriages. I couldn’t believe it was even possible. But I also didn’t know that miscarriages were so common. And I certainly didn’t think that Emily and I would ever find ourselves in the same situation. Yet, here we were. Again.

We live in a society that struggles to deal with tragedy. Professionals don’t know how to help people obtain unwavering peace or joy in the midst of hardship, a fact to which our overcrowded pharmacies bear witness. Self-help gurus don’t agree on the problem of grief, much less the solution to it. Even the church has embraced “positive thinking” as a means of coping with life’s difficulties. So it’s understandable that the title of this article will seem strange to many. Nevertheless, God has said that He sovereignly makes everything benefit His children for the best of ends (Rom 8:28-30). This truth gives the Christian reason to search out God’s goodness in the greatest of hardships. Even a third miscarriage.

New Temptations

Each of our miscarriages came with its own challenges. I have discovered new temptations in my heart with the passing of each child. This time, a couple temptations seemed to arise out of nowhere: *God, am I not faithful to you? What did I do to deserve another dead baby? You know we want more children. There are people who would rather kill their children than parent them. Why not take theirs?*

You can hear the self-righteousness in each of these complaints. Are these thoughts normal knee-jerk reactions for those experiencing grief? Perhaps. Which is why I can sympathize with anyone who has them. But regardless how “normal” these thoughts might be, they are far from justifiable. In each case, these thoughts charge God with evil by asserting that He has done something wrong. They imply that the Creator has sinned against his creature. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our knee-jerk reaction was the same as Job’s - “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh.’ In all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” (Job 1:20-22).

The Proper Response

Worship is the only proper response to tragedy. And, as we see in Job’s example, it is possible to make this our first response to tragedy. Self-righteousness and wrong thoughts of our own worthiness prevent us from ascribing glory and power and wisdom and blessing to God (Rev 4:11; 5:12). Self-righteousness is always an impediment to worship because it blinds us with delusions of our own greatness rather than the unsearchable greatness of God the King (Ps 145:1-3).

Scripture gives us plenty truths to combat the delusion of self-righteousness in the midst of suffering. Here are some thoughts that have helped tether us in the midst of our recent trial:

- My current two children are evidence of God’s kindness, not the result of my righteousness (Ps 127:3-5).
- My hope is not in the fruit of the womb, but in Christ and perfect conformity to his image (Ps 17:15)
- Our works have merited us God’s wrath in hell, not more children than we currently have (Ps 49:7-9; Rom 6:23)
- If God has given me anything, he has given me more than I deserve. As Thomas Watson said, “You who have the least bit from God will die in his debt.”¹ (Job 41:11; Rom 11:35)
- I am not as faithful to God as I think I am (Prov 20:6; 21:2).
- All God’s blessings are in keeping with God’s righteousness, mercy, love, and faithfulness, not my righteousness. The Cross is proof of this (Ps 145:9; Rom 3:21-26; 5:6-8).
- “Yahweh is good and does good,” therefore, I must seek to learn his person from his providence (Ps 119:68).
- Bitterness towards God would accomplish nothing. To remain angry with God would not resurrect my dead children, nor would it produce joy or prosperity in the future (Job 35:5-8).
- Will you only worship God when he fulfills your desires in your timing and on your terms (Job 2:10)?
- To demand something other than what God has ordained for us is to distrust God’s wisdom and sovereignty (Pro 16:1, 9; Lam 3:37-39).
- I do not know how to run my life better than God does (Rom 11:34).

The Benefit

Before our third miscarriage, I had not experienced these temptations to self-righteousness (or at least I wasn’t aware of them). I never recognized the proud thoughts of self-righteousness that lay dormant in my heart before now. And I never had to fight self-righteousness in these ways before. So, what’s the benefit of another miscarriage? In a word, *worship*. Greater Christ-likeness (i.e. becoming a better worshiper of God) will, Lord willing, be the long-lasting effect in Emily and in me. This is the God-honoring result of suffering that no amount of positive thinking or therapy could possibly produce. Improved worship is the result of turning to God when he wisely chooses suffering for us.

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 39.