

**Word Notes Sunday 11/09/16**  
**Roy Wheeler: Knowing God in times of trial**

**Summary** (*read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday, listen to the podcast if you missed the talk <http://www.newmarketcommunitychurch.co.uk/podcasts.htm>*)

**Key Text: Romans 8:14-30**

We all experience times of trial, challenge or loss. Whether it's difficult circumstances or deep personal suffering and loss, when struggling we may be tempted to ask "why". Job certainly did and scripture says he did not sin (Job 1:22) but his candid and straightforward communication with God in the context of genuine searching, brought him closer to God. We read in Isaiah 55:9 that God's ways are not like man's ways, we know that we live in a fallen world and our God is beyond all that we see yet in the depths of suffering this needs fuller explanation and understanding to be of comfort.

Paul writes to the church in Rome about these things – they are undergoing unthinkable persecution and suffering for their faith – and he brings understanding and comfort though an explanation of how being "in Christ" joins us to his glories **and** his suffering (Rom 8:15-17). When experiencing difficulties, suffering or tragedies in our life it's not necessarily that we've done something wrong – sometimes it's because we've done something right. R. T. Kendal put it this way: "Sometimes you can be tapped on the shoulder by God saying "I've got a little trial for you"". Jesus bore our punishment on the cross so suffering is about being refined for something better to come not punishment for something we did in the past.

Job did question why but in a way that he did not sin or curse God and was not rebuked for his questions but his friends were for their counsel. Instead God asked Job some questions eg in Job 38:34: "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself in water" – that is: make it rain, lightening etc. In other words: "To whom do all these things answer, do you understand all the intricacies of nature, no, so how can you possibly understand fully why I've allowed you to suffer?" So Job never understood why but gained a greater understating of the one who ruled his life saying "I have heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5) and "I know that my redeemer lives" (Job 19:25).

Paul says we may not like it or understand it but these present suffering are nothing compared to his greater glory that will be revealed in us. In ALL THINGS God works for your good (Rom 8:28). We are called according to his purpose that we might be conformed to his purpose. Paul's ultimate comfort and encouragement is to assure them and us that "neither death nor life, angels, demons [...etc..] none of these things can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8 35-39).

**Application** (*this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points*)

- 1) Read Job chapter 4, (his friend, Eliphaz the Temanite's counsel)
  - a) What is the main point of Eliphaz's counsel?
  - b) Where do you think this view came from?
  - c) How did it help Job persevere in his trials?
- 2) Now read Romans 8:31-37.
  - a) What is the main point of Paul's message to his friends in Rome?
  - b) Where did his view come from?
  - c) How would it have helped them in their time of persecution?
  - d) What qualifies Paul to speak this way (2 Cor 11:24-33)?
- 3) In Job 2:13 his friends sit in silence with him for 7 days and nights.
  - a) What was good about this and what not so good?
  - b) What should we do if we feel we don't know what to say in such circumstances?

You will know people who are suffering or undergoing "trials" right now. If in your group are you giving them time to share while not taking over the whole meeting every week? What are you doing outside of the meetings to comfort, encourage and sustain them? What would help you right now?

**Witness** (*this is the bit where the cell talks, plans and prays about how to share the Good News*)

Take practical action to alleviate suffering this week. If the time is right give an account of your hope.