Suspended in His Sovereignty

Leigh Ah Shene 5 February 2019



Thursday the 13th of July 2017 – I tackle someone into a jumping castle at a week-long kid's event called 'Holiday Club'. I experience lower back pain, but I have become used to sciatic nerve pain over the last few years and so I assume I have just tweaked it again. It should be fine with some rest and medication.

The pain persists.

Fast forward to Sunday the 16th and two amazing JoshGenners are sleeping over in Port Elizabeth (PE) after a prophetic workshop in East London (EL), South Africa. They arrive at my flat and thankfully suggest that I be taken to the hospital.

We pray… the pain doesn't stop.

They drive me to trauma… the pain is now excruciating. The nurse is taking my vitals and at some point, my legs cave in and suddenly I can't walk anymore. But surely the emergency room has seen way worse and I'll be on my way soon.

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I'm unaware that this is the departure zone and that my 'normal' has suddenly changed. I don't know that I will end up having two major back operations, spend 35 days in hospital and months in recovery. That I would be completely dependent on people and have many invasive bed

baths. That I'd relearn how to walk, adapt to the partial paralyses of my body and begin to discover how Paul could 'count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:8).

As I'm writing this, I've officially hit the year and a half mark since my lumbar disc herniated and damaged my spinal root nerves. Medically, it's expected that I won't have any further functional improvement from here on. Generally, with spinal-cord and spinal nerve root injury, any remaining loss of function present after 18 months is most likely to be permanent.

At times I have dreaded this moment – but instead of feeling deeply disappointed, I find myself comforted by the reality that only Jesus can heal me. Jesus who died, rose, ascended and who is seated at the right hand of the Father and who is coming again. Jesus who took me out of darkness and into His marvellous light and made me a new creation. Jesus who is Lord of my life and who is my Best Friend.

> I've found that He is close, that He chose suffering and that He climbs right into mine.

I have always enjoyed adventures and thrived on spontaneity. When standing unassisted is the most daring thing I'll do all day, and rural mission trips are no longer a realistic dream, I have found that Jesus IS the adventure.

When I imagine that He is far away, standing at the end of the hospital bed and just watching me, I have found the truth to be that Jesus is not aloof. I've found that He is close, that He chose suffering and that He climbs right into mine. His grace alone empowers me to worship, regardless of my circumstances. That He is the God of all comfort – comforting me in my affliction.

As I lean into who He is, I am suspended in His Sovereignty and His goodness. He wasn't surprised by this. In fact, when I look at the Word, I see that this didn't happen without His consent. I've even wondered at times whether He put me forward for consideration as He did with Job. Which He can do because He is God! He also spoke the universe into existence and can heal me in a second.

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While we continue to trust for miraculous healing, we cannot be short-sighted and focus on the

whys. One day we will know fully, and one day I will have a functional, glorified body, but for this day I want to know Him in my suffering. If I get healed tomorrow, I want to know that I didn't waste this hardship but instead embraced it. My hope is that I would suffer well and fix my eyes on Jesus.

There's something about suffering that is so beautifully raw and real that it intrinsically separates the 'fluffy' faith from the true regenerate work of God in our lives. I cannot hide my unbelief in the face of true distress. And He is faithful to meet me there and help me in my unbelief.

> How I knew Him before is not how I know Him now.

Yes, I'll wrestle the questions and grieve the loss of my functions, but every moment is an invitation to find the One whose worth far outweighs any difficulty. I have been changed by His presence during these times as they've escorted me to places of greater dependence on Him. I do miss how my body was, but I cannot ever regret knowing better who He truly is. How I knew Him before is not how I know Him now. With confidence, I can say that I would not swap this time, even for my full healing.