

Yet, He never sinned. He always perfectly trusted His Father. Therefore, to be in turmoil and to dread what you trust God is working, is not inconsistent. If I were not in agony for my daughter, I would be less than a father to her.

### Am I preparing to offer my hope to those around me?

I find that if I don't ask myself this question and plan on sharing my hope, then I won't. It is very easy to freeze up and only focus on myself, my wife, and my children. I need to focus much attention on them. But I also need to be preparing to share the hope of the Gospel with parents who will be suffering the same way as I am and many in ways that are far worse.

I will be in a room full of parents waiting for their children to come out of surgery and it may be a great opportunity to share with them the sweetness of the promises that I have been given in Christ Jesus; to speak the Gospel into lives that are full of brokenness, fear and anxiety and let them know that the God over all things can be their Father in Christ Jesus.

These are the thoughts, promises and questions which comfort me. During this time I need to bathe myself with heavenly realities. I need to flood my mind with the greatness of God and His care for me in Christ so that Psalm 94:19 might be my words: "When the cares of my heart are many, Your consolations cheer my soul."

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A PUBLICATION OF:

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Carbondale, PA  
Permit No. 25

COVENANT REFORMED CHURCH  
47 S. Church St., Carbondale, PA. 18407  
570.282.6400 | covenantrc@verizon.net  
[www.CovenantRC.org](http://www.CovenantRC.org)

Proclamation is Free upon Request. Please let us know of anyone who might like a subscription. To request permission to reprint, offer feedback, or to be removed from the mailing list, please contact using information above. For archives, visit [covenantrc.org](http://covenantrc.org).

**Free 52 week video study  
on Reformed Theology  
available any time online!**

As an exposition on the *Apostle's Creed*, the *Ten Commandments* and the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Heidelberg Catechism* is a practical and personal guide to the *Bible* and a winsome introduction to reformed doctrine.

All 52 lessons can be viewed at  
<http://vimeo.com/covenantreformed>

# PROCLAMATION

Promoting robust, religious thought in the tradition of orthodox, historic Christianity  
March 2011, Issue 21

## PREPARING FOR SURGERY:

### PONDERING GOD'S GRACE IN THE FACE OF TRIAL



**MIKE CONROY** pastors Grace Fellowship in Tunkhannock, PA. He is scheduled to speak on adoption at this year's *Life Reformation* Conference, July 16. For more info visit [LifeReformation.org](http://LifeReformation.org). The surgery about which Mike writes below was greatly blessed by God. Ada is recovering well.

This week my youngest daughter is scheduled to have surgery at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). She has a blockage where her ureter connects to her bladder. This is a difficult and trying road that we have been down before; Ada had her first operation in October of 2009.

Below are six thoughts, promises or questions that are all very close to my heart as I prepare for this surgery. I share them because I find comfort, and grace as I ponder, in writing, the things of God. I share them to help those who will undergo trials like this one. It is God's design that when we suffer and find comfort in Him, that we are then able to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:4).

**I'll never have more compassion on Ada than God does towards me.** My heart is broken for my daughter. She has suffered pain and discomfort from before she was born (doctors detected kidney problems while she was still in the womb). I relate to the story of the Canaanite woman pleading for Jesus to heal her daughter in Matthew 16:21-28. Having pain afflicted on my daughter is worse than pain in my own body. I am full to the brim with compassion for her.



God's compassion on me is infinitely greater. My compassion on Ada is only a finite and fallen picture of the perfection of my Father's compassion for me. My compassion is raised, largely, by the problem in her body,

but my Father's is toward the problem in my soul. In my compassion I would spare my daughter this pain, but in God's compassion to me, He has given us this pain. My compassion is expressed mainly in thoughts and prayers and dependence on God and others to fix it. God's compassion is in His ability to fix and solve my greatest problem of sin.

The picture of my brokenness points to the infinitely great and unearned compassion of God towards me. "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:13).

### **I am reminded of Ada's and my greater problem.**

Oh, how I hate when bodies don't work the right way! Oh, how I hate when kidneys fail! Oh, how I hate the pain it brings to Ada! But if I really hate this, then I will hate the cause of it. The main cause of this kidney malfunction is neither genetic nor chance. The main cause of it is sin. If I am angry at health problems, then I should be even angrier at sin.

This fills me with hope in the midst of surgery because Jesus has healed my greater problem. Yes, broken bodies are a concern. Yes, we should labor to help those with health problems. But we need to go all the way to the root of the problem. This doesn't mean that Ada or I sinned to cause this ailment. It means there would be no health failures at all without sin entering this world through Adam's transgression. Jesus has cured the root of our problem

and promises to show us the fullness of the fruits flowing from His broken body: new heavens, new earth, new bodies, no pain, no cancer, no kidney malfunctions, no tears, no death.

Here is a question that I ask myself: Would I rather Ada had a perfect body for the rest of her life and be without Christ? Or, do I rejoice that God might use this pain to teach her of Him? Am I hoping in God to use this as a step to bring her to Christ, who is better than all health and long life?

### **Ada will be in no more danger during surgery than she was on the ride to the hospital.**

This does not mean that there will be no turmoil within me while she is in surgery. It's just to state the obvious; God reigns. God is not under trial during my daughter's surgery. He is able to perfectly heal her on the ride down just as much as He is able to cause the surgery to heal her. He is sovereign. Ada's odds of living are not hindered while she is under the knife. She is, and all of us are, under the sovereign hand of God Who works all things according to His own purposes and Who is not hindered, frustrated, or bound by statistics. Therefore, my hope is in the sovereign God Who reigns over every action and event that ever takes place on earth or anywhere in the universe.

### **"No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11b).**

There are two parts to this. The first is: Do I believe that? Do I believe

that God would not be good to me if He withheld Ada's surgery? That's what this verse means. God does not withhold any good thing from me. If surgery is a thing that He has given, then it is designed for good.

The second part is: How is this good? That is an important question. It does not mean that what is given is good in and of itself. This does not mean that her kidney concerns are good. They are not. They are a result of the fall, and therefore they are, in one sense, not good. Psalm 84:11b stands because of Romans 8:28. Meaning: God works in and uses bad things for my good. That good is primarily being conformed into the image of His Son (see Rom. 8:29). The primary good that is in this trial for me is this: On the other side of whatever happens there will be a better Christian, a better husband, a better father, a better pastor, and a man who trusts in God more.

Many people go to Romans 8:28 for something that God has not promised. Often I hear this kind of logic: If I lose this job that means that God will give me a better job. If I got stuck at every red light that probably means that I would have gotten into an accident otherwise. Now, that may be true. God is able to do that and a thousand other things through any tragedy that comes into our lives, but that is not what the promise is. The promise is that we will be conformed into the image of Christ.

We must cultivate a taste for growing in holiness that outweighs temporarily improved circumstances. When we think that if some earthly

"bad" thing happens to us then God has to give us some earthly better thing, aren't we commanding God to do our bidding along the lines of the prosperity gospel? Rather, Romans 8:28 is the call to trust in God and delight in something better than circumstances; knowing Christ better, reflecting more of Jesus, and being able to worship Him better. It takes grace to think and live like that, but God is rich in grace, which He freely gives to us. Therefore, I am trusting and delighting in the promise that God will sanctify me and enable me to trust Him more on surgery day.

### **I am trusting in God with agony.**

Everything I have said so far in no way means that this experience will be easy. Many times Christians say, "Oh, no. I'm fine. I'm trusting in God." In other words, we think that trusting in God takes all of the pain out of the trial. That is not true nor is it helpful. It isn't helpful because we might start to think if we feel pain in our hearts when a trial is coming upon us, it means that we aren't trusting in God. We will be in turmoil because the trial isn't easy and then we will feel guilty because we are in turmoil.

Rather, we look to the example of Jesus. He trusted in God without wavering at all and when He knew it was time to submit to the will of His Father and drink the cup of His wrath, He agonized over it. He prayed that it would be taken away. He prayed with such intensity that He sweat out blood. We might look at His actions and say, "I don't know if you are trusting God, you are in turmoil!"