



Dear God, from all this pain,
please bring unexpected good.

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It seems cold and unfeeling to make lists of good things in the midst of all this pain – especially while things are fresh and even still happening. But part of making sense of what’s happened and finding meaning in despair is finding the good.

While the bushfires have burned the media have reported on all sorts of stories of hope and positivity. Which has been enormously encouraging. For example, bush regeneration that’s already begun, the heroism and selflessness of our amazing volunteer firefighters, the brilliant effort to save the rare Wollemi Pine, the fact that more people are now thinking about how to care for the environment and live with an increasingly unpredictable climate.

But personal stories have been the most moving. The people saved by a hero in a boat who took them to safety in the nick of time as fire raced to the water’s edge. Selfless neighbours saving other people’s houses whilst their own burned. And out of all the pain, communities that have drawn closer in ways that are rare when times are good.

We really shouldn’t be surprised at this growing list. The Bible promises that it is God’s plan to bring good from evil. For example, through suffering, He refines our faith and moulds our character. But suffering can also restrain us from a wrong course, remind us that we’re frail before our great God or be a punishment when we’re foolish. And have you noticed that when we suffer we’re better able to comfort others in similar situations?

One of the hardest pills to swallow is the assurance that those who love Jesus will be persecuted. Then, when this happens, the Bible tells us that God will use this suffering to show the world that his people’s witness is real. In a world filled with pain and sorrow, suffering can only increase the desire of God’s people to be with their heavenly father in heaven. That’s certainly a good thing.

But the greatest good of all is found at the cross. Jesus is the innocent hero whose painful death took us from judgment into the safe arms of our heavenly Father. In one of the Bible’s four biographies about Jesus, the author, Mark, records this prediction from Jesus:

“the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and after three days rise again.”

Those final words about Jesus rising make the suffering of this world bearable. Because we know that, if Jesus rose from the dead, then we, in turn will also. We just need to hang in there.

Prayer: Dear God, please give me the strength to endure this world and to trust in your goodness even when things are difficult.

Bible: *“... the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and after three days rise again”.* Mark 8:31