#88 – God Moves in a Mysterious Way Study (Ellia He) – 25.09.21

- Today we're looking at "God Works in a Mysterious Way"

Call on someone to read the hymn

Pray

Background

- Written by Cowper between 1771-2
- Cowper: Foremost poet in England from the late 18th century to early 19th century
- Struggled with bouts of depression and multiple attempts at suicide.
- This was the last of about 68 hymns Cowper wrote for the Olney Hymnal, which he worked on with John Newton. It was originally under the title: "Conflict: Light Shining out of Darkness."

I chose this hymn because in many ways Cowper's life presents the question we all face to some degree, of how we are to view the trials of our life and to respond to it. There is a famous story, although not substantiated, that he got into a cab one night intending to be taken to the bridge so that he could jump off, but there was a great fog, and they got lost, so that in the end, he found that he had been driven home. Praising God that he had been lost only to be found, he wrote this hymn.

This raises the question: **How do we respond to suffering? How are we to counsel ourselves or others when there is no earthly hope of relief and things seem relentlessly in shambles?**

In thinking about this larger question, as I read the hymn again, ***what are the actions God does, what are the actions commanded of Christians, and how are they related?*** *what are the actions God does, what are the actions commanded of Christians, and how are they related?*

1. God moves in a mysterious way
   His wonders to perform;
   He plants His footsteps in the sea
   And rides upon the storm.
2. Deep in unfathomable mines
   Of never failing skill
   He treasures up His bright designs
   And works His sovereign will.
3. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
   The clouds ye so much dread
   Are big with mercy and shall break
   In blessings on your head.
4. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
   But trust Him for His grace;
   Behind a frowning providence
   He hides a smiling face.
5. His purposes will ripen fast,
   Unfolding every hour;
   The bud may have a bitter taste,
   But sweet will be the flower.
6. Blind unbelief is sure to err
   And scan His work in vain;
   God is His own interpreter,
   And He will make it plain

what are the actions God does, what are the actions commanded of Christians, and how are they related?

Observations:

1. God's work, truth, and attributes surround the commands given to believers.
2. We take courage as a response to His goodness.
3. We do not rely on our own sight, but trust because of our knowledge of his disposition.

Images:

Footsteps in the sea, riding upon the storm - Psalm 73

7"Will the Lord spurn us forever
and never show His favor again?
8Is His loving devotion gone forever?
Has His promise failed for all time?
9Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has His anger shut off His compassion?"
Selah
10So I said, "I am grieved
that the right hand of the Most High has
changed."
11I will remember the works of the LORD;
yes, I will remember Your wonders of old.
…
19Your path led through the sea,
Your way through the mighty waters,
but Your footprints were not to be found.
20You led Your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Deep in unfathomable mines - Job 28

"Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold that they refine…
Man… overturns mountains by the roots.
He cuts out channels in the rocks,...
and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.
12"But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
13Man does not know its worth,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
…
23"God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
…
28And he said to man,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

Clouds breaking into blessings - Ezekiel 34:26

Do not judge the Lord by feeble sense - Is 55:8-9

Purposes ripen, bitter will become sweet - 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

> 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Blind unbelief, God is his own interpreter. - Gen 40:8, Gen 50:20

> "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

2 Corinthians 4:6

> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14,16-18

> 13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.
> 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Read after discussion for closing thoughts;

Isaiah 50:10-11

> **Who among you fears the Lord**
> **and obeys the voice of his servant?**
> **Let him who walks in darkness**
> **and has no light**
> **trust in the name of the Lord**
> **and rely on his God.**
> **11Behold, all you who kindle a fire,**
> **who equip yourselves with burning torches!**
> **Walk by the light of your fire,**
> **and by the torches that you have kindled!**
> **This you have from my hand:**
> **you shall lie down in torment.**

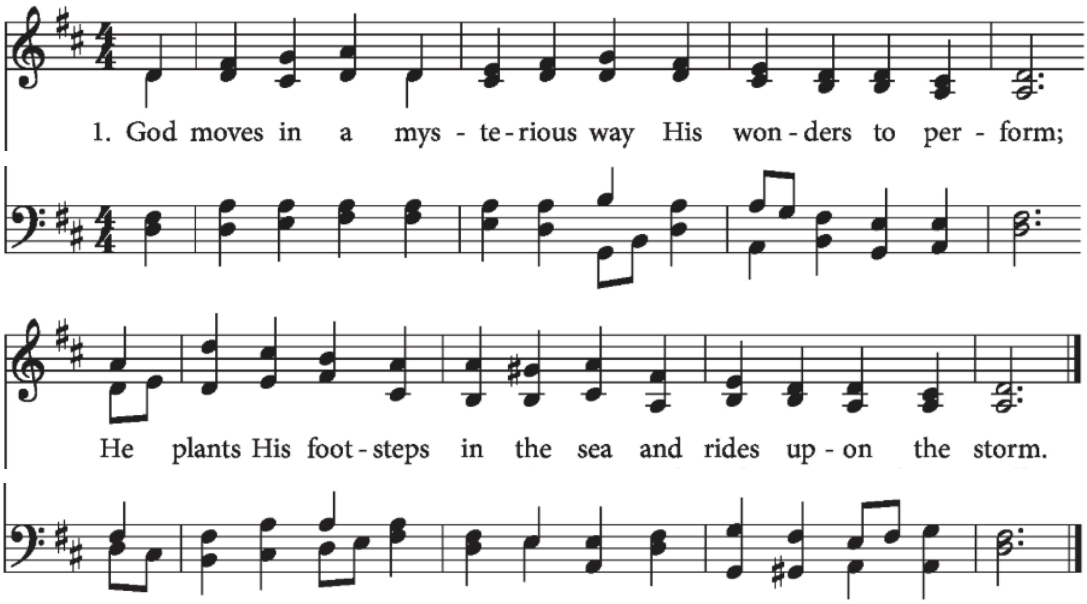
What is our response to seemingly relentless suffering?

1. Even when there is no visible light, Trust God
   Sight on earth is not promised, but God's unfailing nature is.
2. God is greater than our doubts and sin; nothing escapes his design and plan, He is the interpreter of all things. Not us.
3. Do not rely on your own sight or fire. Trust in God's even when it is invisible.

"Conflict: Light shining out of darkness", **not** a promise that darkness will cease presently.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way 412

William Cowper, 1774 DUNDEE CM *Scottish Psalter*, 1615



1. God moves in a mysterious way
   His wonders to perform;
   He plants His footsteps in the sea
   And rides upon the storm.

2. Deep in unfathomable mines
   Of never failing skill
   He treasures up His bright designs
   And works His sovereign will.

3. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
   The clouds ye so much dread
   Are big with mercy and shall break
   In blessings on your head.

4. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
   But trust Him for His grace;
   Behind a frowning providence
   He hides a smiling face.

5. His purposes will ripen fast,
   Unfolding every hour;
   The bud may have a bitter taste,
   But sweet will be the flower.

6. Blind unbelief is sure to err
   And scan His work in vain;
   God is His own interpreter,
   And He will make it plain.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14,16-18

13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.
16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow **63**



2. 'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer,
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

3. I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

4. Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part.

5. Yea, more with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Cast out my feelings, laid me low.

6. Lord, "Why is this?" I trembling cried,
"Will you pursue your worm to death?"
"'Tis in this way," The Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

7. "These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set you free
And break your schemes of earthly joy
That you would seek your all in me."