

ROGER CARSWELL

WHY ME?

PERSONAL STORIES OF HOPE IN SUFFERING

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INTRODUCTION

No one likes to suffer. Yet life is not fair. We wonder why it seems that the worst people prosper and the vulnerable struggle through no fault of their own. Most people would love to believe that if and when pain comes their way they would be courageous examples, bearing it with strength, patience and hope.

'Why me?' has chapters that briefly try to examine these issues. Sandwiched between them are 12 stories of people who have been through the mill of suffering, yet have either found or proved God in life's toughest times. Men and women, young and old, from different nations and backgrounds, each has suffered; some lingeringly, others suddenly and dramatically. They have heard the voice of God, so could trust Him in the silences. They have found that faith is not based on explanations but on the promises of God. Their testimonies challenge us to listen to the Lord of all, who is never taken by surprise, but is at work in all circumstances, personal and global.

Just over 600 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Habakkuk was perplexed, knowing that his country was about to be invaded by the cruel Babylonians. He could not understand why God was allowing this, but as he prayed, waiting for God and listening to Him, Habakkuk sang words which have been immortalised and sung in public worship since.

WHY ME?

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labour of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls –
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*
(Habakkuk 3:17–18, NKJV)

In writing this book my prayer has been that you will find the God who not only cares for you, but can cope with you. We are invited to come to Him as we are, and as we respond, He does not leave us as we are, but works in us to make us the people we were created to be, and – in His time – to take us Home to be with Him for ever.

CHAPTER 1

WHY DOESN'T GOD INTERVENE?

For affliction does not come from the dust, Nor does trouble spring from the ground; Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward. (Job 5:6–7, NKJV)

I had been waiting for some time at what was then the Czechoslovakian border for customs' control to allow me to drive into Austria. It was a beautiful sunny morning, but the gentleman in the car behind me looked gloomy and concerned. Eventually we struck up a conversation.

He was a German university lecturer and, like me, was returning from Poland. He had visited Auschwitz Concentration Camp, which is now a memorial to the unimaginable suffering of the 1930s and 40s. He felt overwhelmed with grief and shame. He too was a Christian, but found himself, as do so many others, asking himself, 'Why didn't God do something to stop it all?'

Over the centuries suffering has afflicted multitudes