

TOGETHERFORADOPTION

Our Tragedy and God's Gift of Adoption: A Tribute in Honor of Maria Sue Chapman and My Son Daniel

By Dan Cruver

In honor of his daughter Maria Sue, Steven Curtis Chapman wrote a CNN article entitled, "Our Tragedy and God's Love for Orphans." It is a great example of how vertical love (God's adoptive love for us) can move horizontally (our adoptive love for an orphan). Steven's article about Maria and God's love for orphans moved me deeply because of the two adoption stories that God wrote into our family's story through the illness and death of our firstborn son, Daniel.

God used our son Daniel's untreatable illness and untimely death at three years old to send our family on two wonderful adoption journeys. Ten months before Daniel died the Lord brought Isaiah Owen into our family through adoption. A year after Daniel's death God gave us Noah Daniel (Noah means "rest"). We named our second son through adoption "Noah Daniel" to remind us of the "rest that God had given Daniel." Since then, we have come to see God's gracious provision of adoption within Scripture's grand story of redemption as the story of God's gift of rest to His afflicted children. It is through the consummation of our adoption—the redemption of our bodies—that God gives us rest from all of our affliction (see Romans 8:23; cf. Exodus 4:31). Our family sees a strong connection between the affliction and death of our first son, Daniel, and the treasure of the gift of adoption. So in honor of this wonderful connection, I share the tribute I wrote for Daniel's memorial service in November 2002.

Daniel's Story: Our precious Daniel William Cruver II was born on October 12, 1999. When he was thirteen hours old, our seemingly healthy baby boy began experiencing seizures. After one week in NICU and many tests, we were sent home with no diagnosis and some seizure medication. Throughout the next several months Daniel's seizures continued unchecked by medication. As he grew healthy and strong physically, we noticed that he was not reaching any of his developmental milestones. Our Daniel never smiled, cooed, turned his head, rolled over, sat, crawled, talked, or walked. The doctors of Duke, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and Johns Hopkins concurred with our local doctor that Daniel had some unidentified type of incephalopathy that was causing his seizures and preventing his development. Our family and friends around the world prayed with us for healing and for the grace and strength to meet each challenge. We settled into life accepting Daniel as the sweet and helpless son and brother that he was.

Every day God answered our prayers. He abundantly provided the grace and strength we needed. On October 13, 2002, the day after Daniel's third birthday, God began to reveal His answer to our prayer for healing. As an ambulance rushed us to the hospital after Melissa (Mommy) administered CPR to Daniel, we began to realize that Daniel's disability was not static. We repeated this scenario two more times until on November 4, 2002 Daniel was placed on a ventilator and was admitted into the PICU. Daniel's seizures had taken away his ability to swallow. This inability was causing him to aspirate on his own secretions. On November 19, 2002, God answered our prayer for healing. Our answer was not for physical healing but for

spiritual healing. Our good and gracious God took Daniel from this world of pain and suffering. On that day our baby heard the words, "Welcome home, my child!"

The following tribute was read November 21, 2002 at the memorial service for our son. You may hear that service on Sermon Audio at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sermonID=112102231916>.



My Tribute: In the midst of his suffering, Job spoke these words: "My days are past, my plans are broken off, even the desires of my heart" (Job 17:11). For the first time in our lives these broken words of Job echo the substance of our thoughts and the emotions of our hearts. Surely it is the Lord who gives and the Lord who takes away; blessed be the name of our Lord.

We prayed for healing. But should God, in His gracious wisdom choose not to grant healing, we prayed that God

would take Daniel gently and tenderly. We asked our God for grace. Grace to let Daniel go for His glory and Daniel's eternal joy. We prayed that God would sanctify our deep distress unto us; that He would continue to work through Daniel's testimony in the days, months, and years to follow; that He would keep us from being overcome with regret and guilt, and that the Great Shepherd of the sheep would minister intimately to Daniel's spirit in those moments of passing from this world to the next.

We prayed knowing that God gladly hears the cries of His children. And though He did not grant all of our pleadings, we put our hands over our mouths and bow our heads in worship of our Sovereign God. Psalm 115:3 says, "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases." Our God does whatever He pleases. So with heads bowed in worship we say, The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending was pleased both to receive our requests and to take our beloved son, Daniel. Again, we put our hands over our mouths and worship. Worthy is our God, who in His unspeakable grace was pleased to bruise His own Son, to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing for He has done what He has pleased with our little Daniel!

While Daniel was with us, we were the ones who were free, we were the ones who could walk and talk and sing and play and smile and touch and kiss. His was to sit quietly and take in a world that he could not understand or enjoy. But now things are quite different. The tables have been turned. Daniel is now the one who is free and we are the ones who remain in these bodies of death. We are the ones who groan with all of creation to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Daniel has that freedom which we all desire. Yet we with Daniel groan within ourselves, waiting for the consummation of our adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). So we cover our mouths and worship the God who will one day make all things new.

Daniel's life's seed has fallen to the ground and died, but will now bear much fruit. The flower of his joy has just begun to bloom and its blooming will be without end. We rejoice that Daniel's three years of almost unrelenting suffering are over. May the Christ who has carried our sorrows and sufferings be praised! Unlike Lazarus, who was raised by our Christ only to die once more, Daniel lives never to die again. The One who is the Resurrection and the Life has granted to Daniel not

only an abundant, overflowing life of intense consciousness, but such life as is everlasting. We say to our son, "Daniel, we grieve not only for our loss of you, but also for our sin-induced blindness and unbelief in the face of the most weighty moments of our lives. But though we grieve we also rejoice in your inheritance! And Daniel, we wish to go HOME too. We love you and through your life we have grown to taste more of God's goodness. O Daniel, our great hope, amidst our grief, is that Jesus paid for all our sin. And one day, with you our son, we will stand complete before the throne." So our hands cover our mouths and we worship the majestic God who made our precious Daniel.

Daniel was God's silent little preacher. He has preached and we have listened. So we praise our God who has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and in that choosing gave us Daniel for a short, but deeply treasured time. We cover our mouths and worship the God whose strength is made perfect in weakness; blessed be the name of our Lord.

I close this tribute with words from a friend: "What a ministry little Daniel has had in our lives! More powerful in many lives than the wasted worldliness of those who grow old for nothing. Weep for your loss, and weep for those who have never tasted so much of God and eternity. Things are not what they seem."



Tribute written by Dan Cruver, Director of Together for Adoption, in honor of his son Daniel and Maria Sue Chapman and in hope of the consummation of our adoption as sons—the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). Contact Dan via e-mail at: dan.cruver@TogetherforAdoption.org