



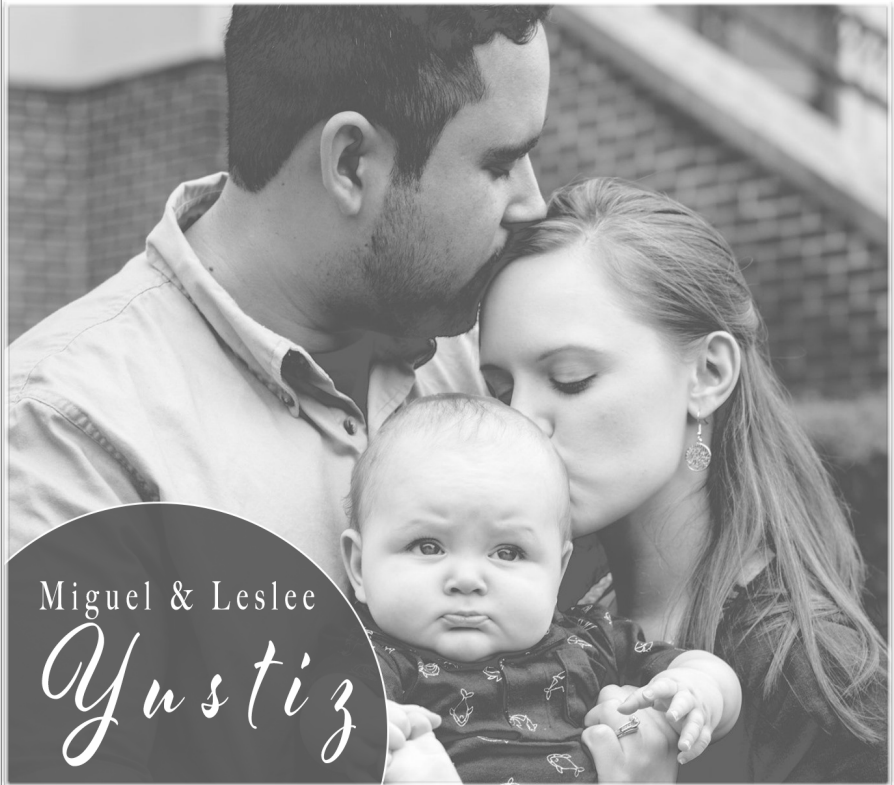
EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) is “one of the towering geniuses in the the last 100 years of American church life.” Sinclair Ferguson also wrote that while known for his academic mind and clear evangelical views, “his life was not free from personal burden.” Not long after his marriage to Annie (1876), she was struck by lightning which severely debilitated her until the day of her death (1915). In fact, it was often necessary for Warfield to teach his classes at Princeton from his home so that he could be near his wife. However, he did not live his life in defeat, and his “life burden” became a model to all of living victoriously in the midst of suffering. His words on Romans 8:28 still ring true today: “All that comes to you is under His controlling hand. He will so govern *all things* that we shall reap only *good* from all that befalls us.”



Miguel and Leslee Yustiz came to VBTS four years ago to pursue the MDiv. God has greatly blessed Miguel’s studies and has blessed him and Leslee with a beautiful son. Miguel and Leslee serve together as youth and music leaders at a local Baptist church. What seemed to be a smooth path to graduation this May has been interrupted by our Lord with a formidable “bend in the road.” Leslee is pregnant with their second child, Gabriela, and their baby girl has been diagnosed in-utero with a severe heart defect called *Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome*. This means that the left side of the baby’s heart is gravely underdeveloped and is not able to properly pump blood. In mid-December, they will temporarily relocate to Philadelphia so that their baby can undergo immediate, life-sustaining surgery after delivery. Will you please pray for this family? Their faith is strong; yet they are in need of our prayer and support—thank you!



The Spiritual Fruit of Suffering

Adoniram and Ann Judson set sail for India in 1812 with a plan to settle on the missionary compound of William Carey. Little did they know that God would move them to Burma, and their life-path would be filled with suffering, anguish, and death. Courtney Anderson vividly describes their hardships in her book, *To the Golden Shore*. She chronicles their lack of Christian converts in their early years, the deaths of three of their eight children in infancy, Adoniram's 20-month imprisonment and torture beyond human imagination, and Ann's horrid death in 1826 after battling months of stress and disease.



In the years following his wife's death, Adoniram was in despair. Anderson writes that Judson seemed to have lost his spiritual footing. He, who was known for his cleanliness, dug a grave in the lion-infested jungle, and sat beside it for days on end contemplating death. He was a broken man. He wrote on the third anniversary of Ann's death these words: "God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not." Though God's grace eventually rescued and restored the spirit and mission of Adoniram, "sadness still shadowed his spirit." However, God still had another 20 years of spiritual productivity for Adoniram. For many months, he had walked close to the corridor of death, but was not allowed to enter. Without realizing it, God used his path of suffering to prepare him for an extraordinary ministry in Burma until his death in 1850 at the age of 62. Before Adoniram and Ann arrived in Burma there were no known Christians. At his death there were more than 200,000 believers, and they were studying the Word of God in their own language due to the tireless translation work of Adoniram.

From a biblically uniformed perspective, the suffering of this couple may have seemed excessive and unreasonable. However, their brokenness became God's method to display Christ's love for all of Burma. When Adoniram and his small army of missionaries began the new year of 1831, "everyone in Burma seemed to want to learn of the new Gospel." The painful existence of Adoniram and Ann became the soil in which thousands of Burmese were planted for Christ. The spiritual fruit of their years of suffering is now on full display: out of their trials the entire nation of Burma was introduced to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Suffering is not optional for the Christian. Paul writes to the church at Philippi: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). Most believers will never face the darkness of severe pain or the distress of grief due to someone's hatred of God and his gospel. Such hostility is briefly described in Hebrews 11:35–36: "Some were tortured, refusing to accept release.... Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment." However, as Paul explains to the Philippians, suffering is endemic to a Christian's life though it may not necessarily be by persecution for the gospel's sake. It may also come as "a thorn in the flesh" due to the hatred of the Evil One, or it may come by just being part of the human family in a broken and sin-infested world. Whatever it may be or however it may come, suffering will indeed penetrate every believer's life, but never without divine purpose. In fact, God has designed all suffering to produce spiritual fruit in the lives of his children, and this makes the afflictions of eternal worth. *I wonder, are we ready for our divine assignment of suffering so that spiritual fruit may eternally abound?*