

Hebrews 11: Can I Trust God? Can God Trust Me?

Part 10: When Faith Doesn't Stop Suffering (11:35-38)

Can I trust God? Hebrews 11 portrays ordinary, *imperfect* people at different levels of *maturity*, who determined their answer was *an obedient*, all in, trusting: 'yes'; whom God, in turn, used to bless the world in extraordinary ways.

Now we come to the harder side of trust. Sometimes God allows our genuine trust in Him to become a witness in the midst of adversity, suffering, hardship or even death. Our topic is when faith doesn't stop suffering.

There were others who were tortured, *refusing to deny God* and be freed. They placed their hope in the resurrection to an even better life. Some faced *contempt and flogging*, others were chained and imprisoned.

They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in *sheepskins and goatskins*, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—**the world was not worthy of them**.

They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

Hebrews 11:35-38

*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep
to gain that which he cannot lose.*

Jim Elliot

Martyred as a young missionary in Ecuador.

Suffering and hardship come to God's children at many levels. The vast swamp of human suffering is *so complex*. It raises *so many questions*. It is such a tough topic that demands great humility and caution and sensitivity on our part.

Some reasons for Suffering:

- Even Christians, in our immaturity, inflict suffering on ourselves. God never instantly imparts wisdom or maturity of character.
- Most of the suffering in human history is inflicted by human ego, pride, greed and lust; through war, coercion and unjust use of wealth.
- Sickness, lethal diseases and aging are all part of living in bodies weakened by the cumulative impact of thousands of years of human brokenness.

For God there are issues of much greater importance than just making our path to the grave smooth and sugar-coated with endless conspicuous consumption and unbroken comfort.

Biblical responses to suffering:

Begin any reflection on suffering at the foot of the Cross. *Jesus' own suffering* speaks to every dimension of suffering, but most of all to this great truth:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to die for us all—how will He not also, through Christ, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:31-32

The Joseph-response to suffering - Genesis 50:20:

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

The Job-reason for suffering - Job 42:5-6

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.
Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Above all books in the Bible, *Job wrestles with the question of suffering*—and Job contains 330 questions, twice the number of any other Bible book.

God *whispers* to us in our pleasures, *speaks* to us in our conscience and *shouts* to us in our pain! Pain is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

C. S. Lewis

Paul's call for how we can use our suffering - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

My own testimony from 25, 50, 55 and 63: Contentment, Joy and Peace.