

# The Book of Job

## The Unsearchable Wisdom of God



### LESSON 18

### WHY DO PEOPLE SUFFER?

# I. Introduction



The question:

If God is good, loving, and omnipotent, then why does suffering or evil exist?

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### A. Spiritual Battle



- **Job 1:8** And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?”
- **Job 2:9** Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”
- **Job 8:5-6** If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy,<sup>6</sup>if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### A. Spiritual Battle



- **1Pet 5:8-9** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. *Resist him*, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of *suffering* are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

# II. Reasons for Suffering

## A. Spiritual Battle



- **2Cor 4:3-4** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
  - **2Cor 4:7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
- 8** We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;
- 9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
- 10** always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.
- 11** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 12** So death is at work in us, but life in you.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### A. Spiritual Battle



- **Eph 6:10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
  - 11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
  - 12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 1. Punitive (Eliphaz)

- **Job 15:20-21** The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless. <sup>21</sup>Dreadful sounds are in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer will come upon him.
- **Job 15:31-32** Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself, for emptiness will be his payment. <sup>32</sup>It will be paid in full before his time

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin

#### 1. Punitive (Bildad)

- **Job 18:5** “Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out, and the flame of his fire does not shine.
- **Job 18:18** He is thrust from light into darkness, and driven out of the world.

**19** He has no posterity or progeny among his people, and no survivor where he used to live.

**20** They of the west are appalled at his day, and horror seizes them of the east.

**21** Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, such is the place of him who knows not God.”



## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 1. Punitive (Job!)

- **Job 27:13** “This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage that oppressors receive from the Almighty:

**14** If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword, and his descendants have not enough bread.

**15** Those who survive him the pestilence buries, and his widows do not weep.

**16** Though he heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay,

**17** he may pile it up, but the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 1. Punitive

- **Prov 1:23** If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.  
**24** Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,  
**25** because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,  
**26** I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you,  
**27** when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.
- **Prov 2:21** For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it,  
**22** but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 1. Punitive

- **Gal 6:7-8** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
- **Rom 1:26-27** For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup>and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 2. Corrective (Eliphaz)

- **Job 5:8** “As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause,
- **Job 5:17-18** “Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. <sup>18</sup>For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal.
- (Bildad) **Job 8:5-7** If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, <sup>6</sup>if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. <sup>7</sup>And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin



#### 2. Corrective (NT)

**Heb 12:3** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

**4** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

**5** And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

**6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

**7** It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin

#### 2. Corrective

- **Prov 3:11-12** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, <sup>12</sup>for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

- (Elihu)

**Job 36:7** He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted.

**8** And if they are bound in chains and caught in the cords of affliction,  
**9** then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.

**10** He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity.

**11** If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### B. Discipline for Sin

#### 3. Preventative (Elihu)

- **Job 33:13** Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man's words’?
- 14** For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.
- 15** In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds,
- 16** then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings,
- 17** that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man;
- 18** he keeps back his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### C. An Inexplicable Problem



- Job's perspective
- **Job 3:20-23** “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, <sup>21</sup>who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, <sup>22</sup>who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave? <sup>23</sup>Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?”
- **Job 7:20-21** Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you? <sup>21</sup>Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity?
- **Job 10:2** I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me.
- **Job 13:24** Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?
- **Job 21:7** Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?



## II. Reasons for Suffering

### D. A Matter of Faith



#### 1. Testing Faith

- **Job 13:15** Though he slay me, I will hope in him;
- **Job 14:14** . . . All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.
- **Job 19:25** For I know that my Redeemer lives

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### D. A Matter of Faith



#### 2. Increasing Faith

- **Job 42:5** I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you
- **Job 42:2** “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> . . . Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

## II. Reasons for Suffering

### D. A Matter of Faith



#### 2. Increasing Faith (Andersen)

- “The purpose of suffering is seen, not in its cause, but in its result. . . We have to be as patient as God himself to see the end result, or to go on living in faith without seeing it. In due season we shall reap, if we do not faint.”
- “The biblical answer is that God (but only God!) can actually transform evil into good, so that in retrospect (but only in retrospect!) it is seen to have actually been good, without diminishing in the least the awful actuality of the evil it was at the time.”