

The Book of Job

When Suffering Comes: Part 1 - The Right “Why”

INTRO • Psalm 43

1. As we make our way thru the Bible, we come now to *The Book of Job* // The timing is providential.
2. I shared briefly last Sunday, I take a couple days each year to get alone with the Lord for direction.
 - a. It's usually later in the year, but as we came to the end of 2020, it was clear I needed to do it sooner.
 - b. So in mid-January I spent a couple days in Pismo.
3. It was a rich time // Some of what God spoke to me about was *personal*.
4. The rest was for CCO >> It was this: We must prepare for hard times.
 - a. It was clear we need to carefully look at Suffering in the Life of Faith.
 - b. I've taught on suffering many times.
 - 1) But God made it clear we need to be far more *focused*, more *intentional* in our look at suffering.
 - 2) **Because** >> We're not just setting up correct doctrine, important as that is.
 - 3) No. Now we're preparing for hard times & the suffering they'll bring.
 - c. An illustration: [Packing a parachute.]
 - 1) The ushers come in & pass out parachutes to everyone. I going to show you how to pack a chute, because *one day* you *might* need to jump out of a plane.
 - a) You'd be only *mildly* interested.
 - b) If we announced that's what we're doing *next* Sunday, you might even say, Yeah, I'll skip next week.
 - 2) **But:** If we we're in an airplane & I say it's going down in a half hour, you'd be *very* interested, *keenly* attentive to the instructions on how to pack your chute >>
 - 3) **Because your survival depends on it.**
5. When I've taught Job in the past & it's been for many mildly interesting.
6. Now? It's different. We're headed into difficult days when the lessons Job teaches are essential for our survival.
7. I'll share more on that later ...

Job Background

1. We'll get a proper intro to the book a week from Wed when we study the first couple chs.
2. Today we pick the tale up at v6.
3. Vs1-5 introduce the good & godly *Job*, wealthy patriarch of a huge family.
4. He lived in Arabia about the same time as Abraham.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

1. That satan's with them means these are angels.
2. They come before God, apparently bringing a report.
3. Since God is all-knowing, their report is for *their* sake, not His.
4. 1 Pet 1 says angels *learn* about God as they watch Him work in our lives.¹
5. That word “present” means they're *reporting* to Him what they've learned.
6. With them is Satan; a name meaning **Adversary**.

¹ 1 Pet 1:12

- a. It surprises many to see Satan in heaven here. // They assume he reigns over hell.
 - b. That's a medieval idea drawn from authors like *Dante*.
 - c. The Bible says there's no one in *hell* yet, what the Bible calls the Lake of Fire.
 - d. Hell isn't opened till after Christ returns.
 - e. And when Satan is finally sent there, he's hell's chief prisoner, not its ruler.
7. For now, Satan's realm is Earth where he works mischief, & Heaven where he accuses us before God.
 8. Which is what he does with Job.

⁷ And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

"Where you been & what have you been up to?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

"Cruisin' Earth."

⁸ Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?*"

1. God brags on Job. He's his *boy!*
2. Now: Who *wouldn't* want this glowing commendation from the Almighty?
3. Well, in light of what's coming, Job! Because this calls him to Satan's attention.
4. Turns out, Satan *does* know him. And he's got an accusation ready.

⁹ So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

1. Satan accused Job of a merely *mercenary* faith; that God *bought* his love.
2. The devil *would* attack if he could but God protected Job // So Satan issued a challenge →

¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

1. Satan contends if God removed His protection & revoked His blessing, Job's faith would crumble.
2. He says, "The *only* reason Job honors You is because You *pay* him to.
 - a. You 2 have an agreement: You protect & prosper him *as long as* he obeys & worships You.
 - b. He doesn't worship because You're truly worthy of it. **No. You have to *PAY* people to honor You.** ²
 - c. Take away the goodies & watch how fast Job's devotion turns to defiance!"

¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

1. In reply to Satan's challenge God says, "You're on! You may have at Job's *stuff*; but not him *personally*."
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1. In vs13-19, Job suffers a catastrophic loss of *everything*.
 2. One messenger after another arrives with ever increasing bad news.
 - a. His property's lost. His wealth's consumed.
 - b. Then last comes word all his adult children were killed → It was an "Epic Disaster"
 3. Now for the test → What will Job's reaction be? Will he curse God, as Satan foretold?

²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

1. Though devastated by his loss, Job trusted God was faithful.
2. He knew what's happened could not have unless God allowed it.
3. And if He allowed it, there had to be **good** reason for it >> Not just **A** reason, a **GOOD** reason.
 - a. This gets right to the nub, the core & central truth our investigation of suffering must come to.
 - b. That when Rom 8:28 says God works **all things together for good** it becomes the lifeline that sustains us when **our** time comes to suffer.
4. Job's devotion to God has *so far* been sorely tested, but it endured.

²² In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

1. Okay. The score is >> God -1 / Devil - 0
2. Satan's claim against Job was wrong.
 - a. So he admitted God was right & that's the end of story.
 - b. That's the way it *ought* to end.
3. **But** it not Satan's way. He can't stop. His ego's so massive he can't admit he's wrong.
4. He keeps coming back like an old stain, like shower-mold.
5. In ch2, Satan says if God will just allow him to afflict Job's *health*, he'd curse God.
6. So God permits that to. The only thing the devil can't do is kill Job.
7. Things go so colossally wrong for Job. Suffering grips him, body, soul & spirit.
8. It's so bad, Mrs. Job tells him he ought to just get it over with -

^{2:9} Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

9. His reply,

¹⁰ But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The Friends

1. "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." >> That's key because for the next 36 chs, Job's friends tell him his suffering's due to his sin.
2. They don't know *what* sin, but for sure, they know, all that's happened is God's judgment.
3. When Job claims innocence, they take it as proof he's hiding something.
4. Their theology said blessing was the reward for good while suffering was punishment for bad.
 - a. Their only options were: Job's suffering is *either* due to his sin or God's failure.
 - b. Since God *can't* fail, Job sinned.
5. For the next 36 chs one friend after another tries to get Job to own up to the sin he's hiding.
6. He answers each one, protesting his innocence.
 - a. He says, "For goodness sake, LOOK AT ME!
 - b. Don't you think if I could end this misery I would?!
 - c. But I don't have anything to confess."
7. Check this: Each round of this back & forth between Job & his friends sees Job become **more demanding** that God explain Himself.
 - a. He knows his suffering isn't due to *his* sin, but he also knows God *can't* fail >>

- b. So → There must be a 3rd option.
- c. & **what** Job knows about God means there **IS** a reason, a **good** one.
- e. So he first *asks*, but then eventually **DEMANDS** God tell him that **reason**.

The Why

1. Because we have chs1&2, we *know* why. Job didn't.
2. **What's hard is that we read to the end, expecting God to give Job the *reason* >> But it never happens.**
 - a. **Though Job never gets the *Why* he ached for,**
 - b. **He *does* end where he needed to; with renewed confidence & trust in God.**
 - 1) You see, after 36 chs of back and forth with his friends God finally show up.
 - 2) But not to comply with Job's demand for a reason.
 - 3) No. He asks Job 70 questions. **70!** Every one of them utterly beyond Job's capacity to answer.
 - 4) Bit by bit, Job's awareness of God's glory & power are renewed,
 - 5) Till he get's to the point where he repents of demanding anything from God.
 - 6) It's enough for Job just to know God IS God & that his suffering has not been because something went wrong.
3. One of the things **Job's story teaches is that there are some things we may never know this side of heaven.**
4. **But we trust that God, in His *infinite* wisdom & love, does indeed have a reason >> A **GOOD** one.**

Deut 29:29 • “The secret *things* belong to the LORD our God, but those *things* which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

5. Job was a man of great faith. But neither he nor Satan knew **how** great till everything was taken from him.
 6. As we'll see, the assault on Job continued in the counsel of his friends.
 7. They tried to wear him down, making his view of God align with their **distorted** ideas.
 8. Job steadfastly refused to buy their error. If he had it would have ruined his faith.
 - a. He **knew** God is all-good, all-loving, all-wise, & all-powerful.
 - b. And that he'd done **nothing** to incur God's wrath or judgment.
 9. Like a bulldog, he clung to the truth God **is** good >> **Even when all *evidence* of that is absent.**
 10. **He knew that IN THE END, everything *would* work out because God **always has the last word.****
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11. **God wants to bring you & I to that same point.**
 - a. We can be thankful we all won't have to endure what Job did.
 - b. It happened to him as *a lesson* for us.
 - c. But, & this is important, while we may not experience the same kind of *Epic Disaster* Job did,
 - d. **We do have our *own* 'appointment with suffering.'**
 - 1) Some *have* had it. Others *are having* it. The rest *will have* it.
 - 2) As history rolls forward to it's Grand Climax in Christ's Return, the Bible is clear –
 - 3) Dark & difficult days come first, when followers of Jesus will suffer.
 - 4) Some may wonder, “Wait a minute Lance. Don't you believe in a pre-trib rapture?”
 - 5) I do! But believing The Church is taken out of the world before the Trib doesn't mean we won't see hard times.
 - 6) It's not going to be rainbows & unicorns on Friday, the Rapture, then it's thunder, lightning & scary beasts Saturday.
 - 7) We can expect that the horrors of the Trib are just the conclusion to trends in place well before it begins.
 - 8) In fact, it's the presence of those trends *in the world today* that convinces many of us we're rapidly approaching the end times.

- e. **THIS** is why we need to carefully, with rapt attention ‘*pack our chutes*’ and make sure we understand the place of suffering in the Life of Faith.
 - f. BECAUSE it’s coming, and too many aren’t ready for it.
12. Let’s face it: Our culture regards suffering, not just as unpleasant, but as evil.
 - a. It’s something to be avoided AT ALL COSTS.
 - b. People assume they have a **right** to a life without discomfort, without suffering.
 - c. It’s an issue of justice! If they suffer, it’s someone fault & they need to pay.
 - d. We don’t have time to go into it now, so let me just say this –
 - e. The idea that we have a right to a life without suffering is a modern phenomenon.
 - f. Throughout history, people have understood suffering as a part of the human condition.
 - g. And one of the most important challenges of life wasn’t in how to *avoid* suffering but how to *endure* it well.
 13. That’s OUR goal as we engage the Story of Job.
 14. Hard times are coming and we need to prepare for them. We can, by looking to this, our Field Guide for Life.
 15. It has a LOT to say about suffering. It’s a frequent topic. So that’s what we’ll be doing for the next few weeks.

CONCLUSION

1. Here’s where we end today: With the Challenge of “Why?”
2. Contrary to Job’s friends’ insistence he suffered for some secret, sinister sin, he said that wasn’t it.
3. There was some other reason, though he did not know what it was.
4. And that’s what he pressed God for – To show up & tell him WHY!
5. Over the course of many chs, he grows more insistent, eventually DEMANDING God show up and explain Himself.
6. In Job 31:35 he says >>

Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, That my Prosecutor had written a book!

- a. “God—**WHY** am I suffering. I want a **written** explanation!”
 - b. **WE** know why: Job was a one-man arena Satan was getting schooled by.
 - c. He’d accused God of having to **pay** people to worship & serve Him.
 - d. God knew Job’s faith was in Him for Who He was, not just what He did.
 - e. So God stake His honor on Job’s faith.
 - f. For Satan’s accusations against both God and Job to be proven untrue, Job COULDN’T know what was going on.
 - g. The only way Satan could be shut up was for Job to be reduced to this >> God is worthy even when all evidence of His worthiness is missing.
 - h. Ultimately Job trusted God is good on nothing more than that He said so.
7. And: He gets a whole book in the Bible that WE might realize the importance of that for our own lives.
 8. In the end, the real question suffering sets before us isn’t “Why am I suffering?”
 9. It’s “Why do I love and serve God?”
 10. THE answer is = Because He is WORTHY!