

Suffering Part 3: The Best Love • Job 38-42

INTRODUCTION • Heb 12:5-11 → Job 38 // The Story So Far

1. In our story so far, Job, a wealthy & influential man of the ancient ME, experienced a catastrophic reversal of fortune.
 - a. In a matter of hours his entire fortune is wiped out.
 - b. Then his adult children were killed when the house where they were gathered collapsed.
 - c. Finally, his health went as some illness saw him covered in painful sores.
2. This calamity was the result of a debate between God & Satan, given in chs 1&2.
 - a. After God called Job a faithful servant, Satan accused him of having a merely mercenary faith.
 - b. That Job only honored God because it *paid to* // Indeed! God *had to* pay people to serve Him.
 - c. To prove it, Satan said if God removed Job's protection & allowed him to have at Job, his devotion would dissolve & he'd defiantly curse God.
 - d. But God *knew* the quality of Job's faith, so He accepted the challenge.
 - e. & the devil went to work reducing Job to a heap of misery,
 - f. Clothed in rags, sitting on the ground in ashes, covered in angry sores.
3. While we know the cause of Job's suffering, *he* had no clue.
4. Ch2 closes with 3 of his friends arriving to console him.
 - a. When they first laid eyes on him, they couldn't believe it *was* him.
 - b. So they tore *their* robes, put dirt on *their* heads, & just sat with him in silence for a week.
 - c. What do you say in the face of such abject misery?
5. When that week ended, Job began a lament he was ever born to see such trouble.
6. That provoked a response from his friends.
 - a. They each took a turn trying to help Job *out* of his misery. The *way* out seemed obvious.
 - b. Their theology said God blesses obedience & punishes sin.
 - 1) Job was healthy & wealthy *before* because he obeyed God.
 - 2) But obviously, he must have done something really bad to see it all taken away.
 - 3) Their remedy was, "Fess-up! Ask God to forgive, & He'll restore your good fortune."
7. BUT: Job had nothing to confess. He was innocent.
 - a. When he said as much, it only angered his friends, prompting ever stronger condemnation.
 - b. Which moved Job to an even stronger defense of himself.
8. The center chs of the book show Job's *growing frustration* in 2 directions.
 - a. One toward the wrong advice of his friends.
 - b. The other toward God's silence.
 - 1) Job *knew* his suffering was NOT punishment for sin, but there was a reason for it, a *good* reason.
 - 2) *How* the calamity came meant its origin was obviously spiritual.
 - 3) It could not have happened without God's involvement somehow.
 - 4) But Job was absolutely convinced God is good & just.
 - 5) His distress came from Heaven's silence.
 - 6) He pleaded with God for a reason, but no answer came.
9. Job's defense of his innocence gets dangerously close to an attitude of self-righteousness.
10. & what starts as a *request* God explain his suffering *sours* into a *demand* God show-up & answer for Himself.
 - a. Job goes right up to the edge of questioning God's justice.
 - b. It all comes to a halt when God DOES show up.

c. But the answer He gave Job wasn't what he expected.

Job 38 // ¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, & said:

² "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, & you shall answer Me.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ When the morning stars sang together, & all the sons of God shouted for joy?

1. This is just 6 of 55 questions God posed Job.
2. Each of them reminded him of God's surpassing greatness.
3. Imagine Albert Einstein walking into a class of 3rd graders, giving them a pop-quiz.
 - a. "Boys & girls," he says, "Clear your desk of all but a sheet of paper & pencil.
 - b. "Now: Describe the Theories of General & Special Relativity. You have 20 minutes. Go."
4. That's somewhat of what happened here.
 - a. God says, "Job, you demand I explain what's happened to you. You require a reason from Me."
 - b. "First, Pop-quiz. Explain Creation. How'd I do it? How big is the universe?"
 - c. "How does it all work, Job?"
 - d. 3rd graders would have a better chance of explaining Relativity than Job could answer God.
5. As each of those 55 questions came at Job, here's what happened ...
 - a. **During the back & forth between Job & his friends, Job got bigger while God got smaller.**
 - b. **His pain shifted his focus & attention to himself.**
 - c. **& as his demand for answers became more strident, God seemed to shrink.**
 - d. **Then, when God appeared & spoke, things began to move back to their proper perspective.**
 - e. **Job's view of himself became more realistic in the face of God's revelation.**
 - f. **God, Who IS great, became great again to an ever-shrinking Job.**
6. Look at v1 of ch 40.

¹ Moreover the LORD answered Job, & said: ² "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."

- a. After all those questions utterly beyond Job's capacity to answer, God says →
- b. "What do you have to say for yourself now?"
- c. "In light of Who I am & who you are, still think I owe you an explanation?"

³ Then Job answered the LORD & said: ⁴ "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. ⁵ Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further."

1. Job's response is a *resigned* compliance; a *reluctant* surrender.
 - a. God still hasn't given him what he wants >> A *reason* for what he's suffered.
 - b. Our translation misses the *pout* in Job's reply.
2. **God doesn't want our *reluctance*. He wants our *repentance*,** & Job's not there yet.
3. So God asks another 20 questions.
 - a. Earlier, Job had suggested God could do a better job of running things.
 - b. So God asks him if he has any idea how to take care of 2 massive creatures >>
 - 1) Behemoth & Leviathan.
 - 2) Ancient names for what animals we're unsure of today.

4. But by the time God finished quizzing Job, he's moved from reluctance to repentance.

Job 42 // ¹ Then Job answered the LORD & said: ² "I know that You can do everything, & that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. ³ You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁴ Listen, please, & let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, & you shall answer Me.'

5. Then, here's the pay-off; our key for understanding the ultimate lesson of the Book of Job >>

⁵ "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, & repent in dust & ashes."

1. What those who suffer *need*, isn't an explanation. What they need is a fresh look at God.
2. We think we need an answer. In truth what we need >> Is Him.

Discipline

1. Wednesday night we took a brief look at the causes of suffering & put them in 4 board categories.
2. One of those was *Discipline*, what the writer of Hebrews speaks of in the passage we began with today.
3. Every parent knows children need *correction*.
 - a. Some correction doesn't *take* unless the child's *attention* is attached to it.
 - b. That's what discipline aims to do; it *causes us to connect choices to consequences*.
4. Parent's discipline because they *love* their child & want her/him to grow up healthy & successful.
 - a. Mom & Dad know if a child *keeps* making *poor* choices, they become an adult who makes them.
 - b. Discipline steers us away from those things that lead to harm.
5. Our Heavenly Father disciplines us into godliness, because that's how life best works.
6. But there are **2 kinds** of discipline.
 - a. One is *corrective*. It aims to nip our tendency to sin in the bud.
 - b. The other form of discipline *enhances* us by *adding* something positive; a fruit of the Spirit.
7. Peter speaks of this in 1 Pet 1.

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, & glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ...

8. In his 2nd letter, Peter says ...

^{1:5} Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, & to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours & abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, & has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

1. Being spiritually short-sighted isn't a sin, but it isn't optimal.
 - a. As Peter says, the danger of *staying* short-sighted is the ease of falling back into sin.
 - b. So, we ought to press forward in Christ, wanting to grow, yearning to go deeper with God.
2. But the spiritual maturity Peter charts here can't be attained without a challenge, without testing.
 - a. *Faith* isn't genuine trust in God till there's some *risk* involved.
 - b. *Virtue* is moral courage, which means facing fear.
 - c. The *knowledge* Peter speaks of isn't book smarts. It's *experience*.

1) Is God good? Correct theology says He is.

2) But God doesn't want our knowledge of Him limited to what we read in a book & see in a YouTube video.

3) He wants us to *experience* His goodness.

4) & *nothing* reveals that more than when He Himself steps into our lives.

Psa 34:8 // Oh, taste & see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

3. This is the place Job came to when he says - [42:5]

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You."

a. Job was taught correct theology & it kept him from cursing God when pain *came*.

b. But when pain *stayed-lingered*, he began to wonder if God knew what He was doing.

c. Then, when God showed up, Job realized THAT was enough. **God** was enough.

d. Just having God & knowing God had him was all that mattered.

4. Job knew God was good, but not HOW good.

5. All those questions God asked him moved him to realize the vast scope of His goodness.

Perfected Love

1. Back at the beginning, Satan accused Job of having a merely mercenary faith in God.

a. That he only honored God because it paid to.

b. God knew better and so allowed Satan to have at Job to prove him wrong.

2. **The real lesson of the book of Job is that God used what Satan meant as Job's demise to take Job even deeper into his relationship with God.**

3. It was thru Job's suffering he learned something about himself. It was this ...

a. While his devotion to God wasn't *only* mercenary, it was partly so.

b. There *was* a measure of selfishness to his faith. Loving God *did* pay.

c. That lingering bit of self-interest is what grew in the middle chs of the book to bring Job right up to the edge of calling God unjust.

4. But here at the end, when he finally sees how great God is, all that disappears.

5. An illustration:

a. When a couple fall in love, *what* they love is what the other person *does* for them.

b. The feelings they create, the joy they bring.

c. There's an attraction that promises pleasure for the body & soul.

d. They marry, and settle into the challenge of merging their lives.

e. Two people have to learn to set aside self in deference to the other.

f. In fact, that process manifests how very selfish each of them are.

g. To the degree they die to self is the measure to which their new life-together is blessed.

h. So that over time, their love moves from what the other person does for them to the person him/herself.

6. **When we first come to faith, we love God for what He's done; saving us from sin and eternal death.**

a. Then we love Him for the way He changes us over time into the image of Christ.

b. All that's fine and good but it's not the fullness of the love we're destined for.

c. God wants us to love Him for Who and what He IS, not just what He does -

d. Because! God loves us for who and what we are, not what we can do for Him.

e. Let that sink in. → God loves you, not what you can do for Him, but simply because it's YOU!

7. As God's eternal companion, it's only right we love Him as He loves us.

The Burglary

1. We take a short detour now. & I begin with a question:
Are you thankful for CCO? >> Keep that in mind as I tell you a story.
2. One day in '78, I came home from work to discover the front door of the apartment where I lived alone, ajar.
3. Someone had broken into & stolen just about everything of value to me.
4. Standing in the doorway, looking at the ruin that was my living room, a voice spoke, as clear as could be.
 - a. It's one of only a few times in my life that I can say I heard God speak. I heard it here, not here.
 - b. It said, "Go."
5. I knew what that meant because my boss had asked me to transfer from OC to the Bay area.
 - a. But, Lynn & I had just decided to start dating.
 - b. We realized there was something special about our relationship & were both excited about what the future might hold.
 - c. So I was in a quandary. Do I take the promotion & move North, or stay & pursue this gorgeous & fascinating woman?
6. The drive home from work that day was spent asking God what to do.
7. Standing in the doorway, I had my answer.
 - a. Moving would be a whole lot easier since so much of my stuff was now gone.
 - b. So I called Lynn to ask her out, so I could tell her the news.
8. We decided that we wouldn't let the distance stop the relationship.
9. We dated long-distance via the phone. Which was great because we got to know each other really well.
10. I eventually asked her to marry me & after the wedding she joined my up North.
11. We got involved in a small church that was really into home groups.
12. I began teaching one, & right when the church was moving us into more leadership, I got transferred to Oxnard.
13. Lynn & I started a home bible study that grew into this, & here we are just shy of 40 yrs later.

14. So, I ask again: Are you thankful for CCO? >> **Then I'm thankful for that burglary.**
15. Because without it, we'd not be here today. & whole lot of lives would be very different, not for the good.

The Best Love

1. As Job stood before God here at the end, he said, "Now I see."
2. **What** he saw was a good God.
3. & I'm convinced that revelation altered his perception *of all that happened to him.*
4. Because now, he didn't just love God for what God did. He loved God for Himself.
5. And that love filled Job with a peace & joy nothing could touch.

6. God is worthy of our love, not just for what He does, but for Who he is.
7. It's that love alone our soul and spirit long for.
8. If it can only be forged in the furnace of suffering, bring it on.