

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

(James 5:11)

INTRODUCTION

1. Everyone should read at least one great book before he dies and enters into the presence of Truth Himself. The Book of Job is the most profound book in the Bible.
2. Who Was Job. When Did He Live? What Was His Race? Where Was the Land of Uz?
 - A. Since no one knows, this makes Job the perfect Universal Man.
 - (1) Its Chief Character had felt the iron of suffering pass deeply into his soul.
 - (2) As he suffered, he came to regard death as the only possible release.
 - (3) He then began to wonder if there is not another life after this one.
 - (4) Finally, he turns to God as his only vindicator.
 - (a) “The question of suffering and pain in the world has rankled in the human breast through the ages as one of man’s greatest unsolved problems.”
 - (b) “The Book of Job begins with the problem of why good people suffer but almost immediately the discussion embraces the larger question, “What kind of God rules the world, and how can man be justified before Him? The basic purpose is to reconcile God’s justice and mercy with the conditions of human life. The Book wrestles with the fundamental questions of religious faith, the being, character and purposes of God, and the meaning of human life and death. It seeks to clear the way for faith, so that man can believe in God no matter what troubles befall him.”

I. CONFERENCES IN HEAVEN BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN.
(Chapters 1 and 2)

- A. Satan Is As Real As God and is Going Back and Forth Throughout the Earth.
1. We have too many people who think that Satan is an illusion - Sin an Abstraction.
- B. He Suggests That God Strip Job of His Possessions and He Would Curse God.
1. He lost all his property in a single day.
 - (a) Sabeans took oxen and asses.
 - (b) Fire from Heaven burned the sheep and shepherds.
 - (c) Chaldeans raided his camels.
 - (d) The Whirlwind killed his children.
 - (i) “Then Job arose, and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 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.’ In all this, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”
- C. Satan Then Suggested That God Afflict Job: “Skin for Skin, All That a Man Has He Will Give for His Life.”
1. His entire body was afflicted with sores.
 - (a) So disgusting that he went outside the City to the trash heap to live.
 - (b) There he was so tormented night and day he took a potsherd to scrape with.
 2. His wife urged him to curse God and end his misery by dying.

II. SCENE: THE TRASH HEAP OF AN ORIENTAL VILLAGE - JOB, ELIPHAZ, BILDAD, AND ZOPHAR.

- A. They charge Job with sin - This he denies.
- B. They then argue that his claims of innocence is further proof of his Guilt.
- C. They say his afflictions are just the kind which would come by his particular sins.
- D. Elihu says that Job accuses God wrongly while vindicating himself.

III. JOB DID NOT DENY NOR CURSE GOD, BUT HE DID QUESTION HIS PROVIDENCE IN HIS LIFE.

- A. Why, being innocent and upright, had so great a calamity befallen him?
- B. Why, if he must suffer, was he not permitted to die?
- C. Why does Jehovah permit the righteous to suffer and the unrighteous to prosper?

IV. LET US NOW ASK THE QUESTION: "WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?"

- A. In the First Place: Because God through Nature can be no respecter of persons.
 - 1. Matt. 5:45: "That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 2. In a world of Order, all men are subject to cause and effect regardless of virtue.
 - (a) Good people are just as susceptible as bad people to contagious diseases.
 - (b) They strike the ground just as hard when they fall.
 - (i) The world would be an unscientific and unpredictable place in which to live if it were not this way.
 - (c) The righteous suffer as much by Earthquake, Floods, Famine, War, as well as the wicked. This is in the

Natural Order of things. These happen without any thought of virtue or lack of it.

- B. Secondly: Good people suffer because they do not temper goodness with other qualities.
1. We can be just as Good as Gold and yet suffer poverty if we do not work.
 - (a) A Christian must have produce to go along with his prayer.
 - (b) God does not do for anyone what they can do for themselves.
- C. Thirdly: Suffering is God's way of bringing out the best in life.
1. Without suffering, Life would be mechanistic and animal-like, not God-like.
 - (a) Ward in her book *Out of the Whirlwind* says:

“Through suffering, Job came to know God as he had never known Him before. At times, he thought God was cruel to him; at other times that there was no moral ruler. But throughout his experience, his faith was deepening and expanding.” (Job 42:5)
- D. Fourthly: Suffering is God's way of improving the world.
1. Nothing can soften the heart of a wicked world as the suffering of good people.
 - (a) Nothing moves us to contribute more generously to the Cancer, Heart, Tuberculosis funds than the suffering of good and righteous people.
- E. In the Fifth Place: Suffering teaches us to Pray.
1. It is here that the almost prayerless Christians are taught to pray.
 - (a) “Eyes that the Preacher could not school
By wayside graves are raised
And lips say ‘God Be Merciful’
That ne'er said ‘God Be Praised.’”
(Elizabeth Browning)

- F. Sixthly: Suffering and Pain causes us to be Humbled before our God.
1. Even the haughtiest of men become meek and humble during suffering and pain.
 2. It is here that we are reminded of our Great Dependence Upon God.
- G. Seventh: Suffering may be used to teach one a deeper sympathy for others.
1. 2 Cor. 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
- H. In the Eighth Place: Suffering teaches us Patience and Hope.
1. Romans 5:3-5: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
 2. James 1:2-3: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”
 3. James 5:11: “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”
 4. Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
- I. Ninthly: Sometimes suffering is to manifest the working of God.
1. John 9:2-3: “And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’”

- J. (Tenth Place) Finally, pain and suffering are as a result of Sin.
1. Just think of the results of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden.
 - (a) The ground was cursed and Adam was to make his living by sweat of brow.
 - (b) The Serpent was consigned to crawling in the dust.
 - (c) Woman was to bear her children in pain and suffering.
 - (d) Physical death reigned from Adam to Moses and from Moses to the End of Time.
 - (e) They suffered mental anguish and pain by spiritual separation from God.
 2. Look what pain and suffering comes in our present day because of sin.
 - (a) Automobile accidents as a result of a drinking driver.
 - (i) Even the innocent suffer here as a result of sin.
 - (b) Murder, beatings, rape - All of these cause suffering to victim and others.
 - (c) The whole catalogue of Sin is one of pain and suffering.

IV. IT IS IN THE FIERY FURNACE OF HEARTACHE AND SUFFERING THAT WE COME TO STRENGTH.

- A. Some of the greatest men and women of the ages were those who suffered affliction.
1. Fanny Crosby - Became blind at six weeks. Yet her songs are sung by millions.
 2. Tuberculosis cut short the lives of five great song writers:
 - (a) Sarah Adams - "Nearer My God To Thee"
 - (b) W. B. Bradbury - "He Leadeth Me"
 - (c) Burtis Kauffmann - "Fling Wide The Gates"
 - (d) Phillip Doddridge - "O Happy Day"
 - (e) Augustus Toplady - "Rock of Ages"

3. Isaac Watts - Was an invalid all his life.
 - (a) We sing his songs today. "Am I A Soldier of The Cross"; "Alas And Did My Saviour Bleed?"
4. David Livingstone - Body racked with tropical fever 27 times.
 - (a) His Body was buried in Westminster Abbey - But his Heart in Africa.
5. Louis Pasteur - Crippled by paralytic stroke.
6. John Milton - Blind.
7. Beethoven - Was deaf.
8. Helen Keller - Was both blind and deaf.
 - (a) These did not find life made to suit them; they had to make it worthwhile.

V. **IT IS IN PAIN AND SUFFERING THAT WE WIN THE BATTLE OVER SATAN AND THE WORLD.**

- A. The Great Apostle knew how to suffer for Christ.
 1. 2 Cor. 12:2-10: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows) such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I forbear, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in

reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

(a) "When you look at the sweet face of an innocent baby, lying in a spotless cradle of blue or pink, you see sweetness, innocence and purity; but you do not see strength, courage and character. These qualities can be seen on the battle-scarred face of the aged veteran who has smelled the smoke of many a hard fought battle and carries the wounds of many a battle."

(i) The strength of the Apostle Paul was a product of suffering.

B. "The awful agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary were essential steps to the resurrection and ascension, and final glorification on the throne of David at the right hand of God."

VI. WHAT DOES THIS GREAT BOOK OF JOB TELL US?

A. The Certainty of Trial: God will find out in us, as He did in Job, whether we serve God for nought. Can we stand the test and come forth pure as Job did?

B. That God is too Great to be Explained, Analyzed, or Complained Against.

1. God is to be obeyed and trusted, to be held to, even as Job said he would hold to Him, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him.'"

C. That the Purpose of God in Our Lives is to Produce and Crown Spiritual and Moral Qualities.

In times of tribulation and distress, remember
"The endurance of Job." (James 5:11)

"Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near?"

Oh, yes, He cares; I know He cares.
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares."