

Chronological: A Journey Thru Scripture

Lessons on Suffering Job

Well good morning church...today we are going to embark on a journey that may leave us bewildered and full of questions.

Today we are going to try to answer the question, why do good people suffer?

Suffering is one of those topics we try to avoid talking about but is experienced by everyone in the human race. The adage is true; you are either suffering now, have just passed through suffering or are about to enter a period of suffering.

Can I be honest and vulnerable with you this morning? My family is experiencing some suffering right now and I don't like it one bit! As a matter of fact, I have found myself asking the question...God why? Why this? Why now? What purpose does it serve in our lives?

Can you relate? Suffering is not pleasant!

Let me tell you why it is unpleasant. Because we may never find the answers to why we're suffering.

You with me. I'm not trying to bum you out; I just want you to feel the tension I'm feeling. I want you to come out at the end of our sermon this morning with a different perspective and outlook on your suffering.

I want you to know that the little pat answers we give to one another when suffering comes doesn't ease the pain and remove the questions why.

Now, before you tune me out...I do have hope...I don't have all the answers, but I do have hope. At least I'm offering you more than Job's friends offered him.

Speaking of Job...that's where we are this morning. Let me give you a little background.

The author of Job is a mystery, as is the city, UZ, where Job lived. Scholars tell us that Job lived in the patriarchal period, which makes him a contemporary to Abraham, Isaac or Jacob.

Job himself is not Hebrew but according to what we read in Job 1, he is a God fearing, God worshiping man. He even seems to function like a priest, teaching others and offering sacrifices.

Job is a good man who suffers greatly, which begs the question why? Why would God allow such a good man to suffer so much. It's the same question we still ask today; why do bad things happen to good people?

If you're reading Job for the answer to that question, you'll be sorely disappointed. The answer is not there.

You still with me? Do you feel the tension yet?

The obvious question then is why Job? What do we learn from the book? I'm glad you asked, that's the sermon this morning.

Here are 7 lessons we learn from Job:

1. There is a cosmic battle taking place and we are the target of the enemy.

Job 1:8–12 (NKJV) – 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?" **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. **11** But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" **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.*

Our minds are blown when we read these verses. How in the world can Satan appear before God? Remember this one thing, he is accountable to God and can only do what he is allowed to do. Satan and God are not opposite equals, Satan is a created being with limitations and God is not...He is GOD!

The image is a court room scene where God presents exhibit A, Job. He is an example of a godly man. But the accuser questions Job's true loyalty saying that he only loves God because God has protected him and made him rich. Take all that away and Job will denounce God.

God gives him permission to touch Job's life and the rest is history. Job's life comes crashing down like a house of cards.

Job responds in faith and trust.

Job 1:21–22 (NKJV) — 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."* ***22*** *In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.*

When that doesn't work, Satan attacks Job's physical health. He thinks when Job is suffering physically, he will curse God.

Job responds,

Job 2:9–10 (NKJV) — 9 *Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"* ***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.*

For certain not all suffering is at the hand of Satan, but he is our enemy and he loves nothing more than to attack our faith. He finds delight in seeing God's children suffer and question their faith.

Remember, Peter says...

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV) — 8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

2. When people are suffering our best response is to sit with them and be silent.

Job 2:11–13 (NKJV) — 11 *Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12* *And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. 13* *So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.*

Job's three friends obviously loved him. Their initial response was right. They demonstrated compassion and care. They didn't give pat spiritual answers and then leave.

We are often at a loss as to what to say or do when others are going through suffering. Let me give you some advice. The best thing we can do is just show up and be present.

Paul captures this idea when he says...*"weep with those who weep."* *Romans 12:15*

Just be there! And when Job started lamenting, they should have reminded silent.

3. Bad theology is harmful and sinful.

Job's friends think they have all the answers to his all his woes.

Here is their basic argument.

Job 4:7–10 (NKJV) — 7 *"Remember now, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? 8 Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same. 9 By the blast of God they perish, And by the breath of His anger they are consumed. 10 The roaring of the lion, The voice of the fierce lion, And the teeth of the young lions are broken.*

Let's put it this way...

- ⇒ God is Just
- ⇒ God always acts in strict Justice
- ⇒ Job is being punished for sin

Their advice was off base. We know their wrong, we read the first two chapters!

However, that bad theology has infected all of God's people throughout the ages. The disciples are a good example.

John 9:1–3 (NKJV) — 1 *Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.*

See it? The man is born blind, someone had to have sinned.

Have you ever found yourself lamenting your situation by saying you don't know what you did wrong to deserve what's happening to you?

Of course, we have...but it's BAD THEOLOGY! We know this because listen to how God responds to it...

Job 42:7-8 (NKJV) – 7 *And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. 8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."*

4. Suffering has a way of clouding our vision and bring us to wrong conclusions about God.

Remember, Job is an emotional wreck. He is on a roller coaster ride of emotion and heartache. His conclusions are made out of despair. He wants answers but Heaven is silent.

He is clouded by his pain. Just follow his train of thought.

Job 9:22-23 (NKJV) – 22 *It is all one thing; Therefore, I say, 'He destroys the blameless and the wicked.'* **23** *If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent.*

Job 16:9 (NKJV) – 9 *He tears me in His wrath and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth; My adversary sharpens His gaze on me.*

Job 27:2 (NKJV) – 2 "As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,

Job 31:35–37 (NKJV) – 35 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! **36** Surely, I would carry it on my shoulder, And bind it on me like a crown; **37** I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

His conclusion...I'm innocent and God is unjust.

I would say he has a clouded view of the situation.

Perhaps the lesson is that you and I must be careful not to allow our pain to control our faith.

We are quick to be judgmental like Job's friends but here is the next lesson.

5. God honors our prayers even though they are filled with struggle and honesty.

Job 42:8 (NKJV) – 8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

Did Job have a perfect theology of God, nope. Remember he accused God of being unjust.

Job struggled and was very honest about how he felt and yet God honors him.

Honesty never hurt the Lord; He knows your heart anyway. Like Job we can carry our hurt and pain to Him.

6. God is Big and we are not.

Job 38:1–7 (NKJV) — 1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: **2** "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? **3** Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and 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, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

God's conversation with Job was designed to help Job realize just how limited he was in his understanding of God and his situation.

While God is creator and sustainer of the universe, Job is just a speck of dust.

We need this reminder this morning as well. God is not the old man upstairs or a cosmic kill joy of our lives. HE IS GOD!!!! There is NO ONE like Him! He stands alone!

Job didn't get the answer he was looking for, but he did get God!

Job 42:1–6 (NKJV) — 1 Then Job answered the Lord and said: **2** "I know that You can do everything, And 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, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' **5** "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. **6** Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

Job knew of God, now he has seen God! Do you need to see Him this morning? Look at the vastness of the universe and admire Him!

7. God invites us to trust Him in our suffering.

Jesus says...

Matthew 11:28 (NKJV) – 28 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Peter says...

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) – 7 *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

Job looked for an advocate...we have an advocate!

Hebrews 4:14–16 (NKJV) – 14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15* *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16* *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*